

**ARTISTIC
TRUTH
AND
DIALECTICS
OF
CREATIVE
WORK**

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Preface to the English Edition	7
On Artistic Truth	10
New Historicity and New Truth	81
The Truth of People's Heroism.	140
New Conflicts: New Characters	200
Poetic Elan.	263
To See the Dialectic of Life.	308
Name Index	337

Artistic truth is perhaps the ~~most~~ most hotly debated question in literary theory. Each new literary trend has proclaimed its own aesthetic credo, its concept of artistic truth and innovation, the system of artistic means which in its view could best reveal the truth to the reader. Today the struggle of opinions over the question of artistic truth has become more intense. And no wonder if one considers that life is changing swiftly, contradictions are deepening, and human lives are becoming more complex. Literature develops along with life as writers try to meet the challenge of their time, tell the readers the truth about themselves, the world and the current events, and voice their concern about the future—the truth without which mankind cannot advance.

A desire to get at the roots of the truth and be totally sincere has been an inherent feature of the Russian writer and of Russian literature as a whole.

Gorky believed that the Russian classical literature had gained world recognition because it addressed itself to universal human concerns with greater frequency and force than other literatures: "...to this day that splendid temple, built in a fabulously short time, throbs with thought of great power and beauty, feelings of sacred purity—the minds and hearts of true artists." Soviet literature was born in a new epoch marked by great upheavals and achievements. A legitimate heir of the classical Russian literature, it carries on its traditions.

The book offered to the English reader looks at artistic truth at many levels and from different angles, and considers it both as the central problem of literary theory and the supreme goal at which the writer aims in his work. The author is interested to reveal the inner laws of artistic

interpretation of reality. That is why artistic truth is considered in close connection with the typical.

The author maintains that literature and such arts as theatre and cinema have their own means of discovering the truth and can create works of genius whose impact on the minds of men is at least as great as that of scientific discoveries. In realistic art such discoveries take the shape of new artistic types. "The type is an epochal phenomenon," said Gorky. An artistic type gives a concrete and tangible idea of the life of men. Artistic types give us insight into the innermost recesses of the human soul, into people's relations, contradictions and ideals, and radical historical change. At the same time artistic types give us an idea of the aesthetic discoveries made by great writers in their efforts to understand their times and foresee the future. Such an approach enables the author to consider artistic truth, not in abstract terms but in the context of literary history, the evolution of artistic modes of thinking, the succession of artistic systems, in short, to look into the dialectic of artistic work.

The criterion of artistic truth is the relationship between the subjective and the objective factors in identifying the characteristic phenomena of life and creating vivid characters and types. That relationship is considered in the book from a historical and an aesthetic angle. The author traces the succession of artistic systems, turning to the work of Pushkin, Nekrasov, and Tolstoy and revealing their special approach to creating types and their artistic consciousness. He finds a new interpretation of history and new artistic types in the writings of Gorky, Sholokhov, Furmanov, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Bulgakov, Paustovsky, Katayev, Malyshev, and Tvardovsky.

Analysis of specific works enables the author to show the depth of artistic thinking and the scope of generalisations, the discovery of new forms of type-creation by the major Soviet writers. The question of comprehensive perception of the world, a consciously historical approach, and the development of epic forms comes to the foreground and is tackled when the author analyses the books about the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 and books about rural life written in the 50s and 60s.

The author views the present stage of the literary process as part of the general movement of the multinational Soviet

literature along the road of socialist realism. He considers books as widely differing in style, literary structure, dramatic tension, and passions as *Hot Snow* by Yuri Bondarev, *The Living and the Dead* by Konstantin Simonov, *The Conflagration* by Konstantin Fedin, *Truth and Untruth* by Mikhail Stelmakh, *The Tronka* by Oles Honchar, the stories by Vasil Bykov, and Anatoli Ivanov's *Eternal Call*, to name but some. These writers belong to different generations and come from different constituent republics of the Soviet Union. But they all share the humanistic ideals and have added a vivid page to contemporary Soviet literature.

ON ARTISTIC TRUTH

I

Truthful portrayal of reality is the subject of considerable argument, and that is not accidental. When we talk of artistic truth we inescapably bring up the whole set of questions linked with the special form of cognition that is art and with the laws of the interaction of art with reality, which determine its social function. A theoretician's or an artist's answer to these questions, which have to do with a general concept of the specific nature of art, determines his understanding of artistic truth.

The interests of science and the interests of art require that the question of artistic truth be considered in all its complexity, taking into account the general laws of art, but also in all its concreteness, taking into account the specific forms in which artistic truth manifests itself in different arts and different methods. Only a concrete historical approach could yield a valid solution of that complex problem.

For Soviet scholars, the methodological basis in studying the questions of artistic truth is provided by the Marxist theory of cognition and Lenin's teaching about objective, or relative, truth.

Art has its inherent methods of revealing objective truth. Without going into fine detail let us note the prerequisites for a correct solution of the questions of artistic truth. We shall focus on the inherent laws of realistic art.

To begin with, art has as its object of investigation, man and his social being. It has its means of influencing the minds and feelings of men, i.e., the concrete, sensuous form (image). That goes a long way to determine many specific features of artistic interpretation of reality. The cognition of truth in realistic art is determined by its very object. Social being, the complex processes of history,

social upheavals, explosions, wars, and revolutions, man's flight in outer space, the advances of the technological revolution are not just recorded in realistic works of art. For that is just one side of cognition which was aptly described by Alexei Tolstoy, who said: "Literature records the path traversed, it unfolds a motley canvas of history in the wake of the moving masses."¹ But there is another, and in my view, more significant side to it which has to do with the major discoveries in the history of art: *the study of man as the subject of history*. The individual in a literary work is not just a human type but the focus of all the writers' quests. It is through the individual (human type) that a realist writer investigates the social being of man, the role of certain classes in history, the conflict of their interests, and the nature of social clashes and cleavages. Through the human type the writer gives us an idea of the mentality of people, their moral attitudes, their ideals and aspirations. He detects in life the things that are of general interest and portrays them through a typical image. A serious writer is never a passive onlooker: the whole structure of his work pronounces a "verdict", to borrow Chernyshevsky's word, in asserting beauty and negating ugliness.

In terms of aesthetics, it means that the epistemological functions of art are inseparable from its aesthetic functions and from the notions of the beautiful and the ugly. Furthermore, the cognitive functions of art are inseparably linked with its educational functions, with the moral categories of good and evil. That prompts to the writer specific forms of cognition of the truth and its assertion in the light of a certain ideal.

A true artist always wants to create works answering the most urgent questions engaging the contemporary mind. To him, the supreme aim of creative work is truth, which he interprets as man's faith in the triumph of justice. He discovers and asserts truth through a certain type of human behaviour, and a concrete fact in his work is always subordinated to a larger idea (I am referring to really big artists, whose work marks milestones in mankind's history). The higher the consciousness of the artist and the larger his talent the more sensitive his reaction to reality and the more significant his feelings and thoughts, and the ideas

¹ A.N.Tolstoy, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 352 (in Russian).

which he reflects and promotes in his works.

The artist has always been concerned with eternal themes. Man's heroic deeds, his sufferings, the upsurge of the human spirit, and man's fall, the pure love of Juliet, the jealousy of Othello, the greed of Harpagon, the villainy of Jago, or the tragedy of Faust are regarded by him in the light of the universal human ideals, and he pursues the most humane of goals, i. e., to help people overcome suffering and build a happy life, to break out of the dominion of "blind necessity" into the domain of freedom, to use philosophical language.

This brings us to another specific feature of art which must be borne in mind by anyone who talks about artistic truth. Art gravitates towards the absolute both in upholding truth and in creating values. The artist's ideal is always historically predetermined. But it is manifested in a subjective form. That holds, in particular, for the work of the writer whose ideal is clear and whose stand in defence of progress is definite. The writer asserts with all the force of his talent and conviction the truth which he has discovered in the throes of creative work and regards as absolute truth (and which, philosophically, is only part of objective truth learnt by man, reflecting an aspect of reality). To him, the world appears exactly as he has depicted it in his work. The author calls on the reader to see the world and judge events within his (the former's) own frame of reference, in terms of his own truth. In his work, the writer impresses the reader with the emotional quality of his thoughts and imagery, and seeks to influence his thoughts and feelings, subjecting them to his own will and to his own ideals, "...to tow life", as Alexei Tolstoy once said.

The appeal of absolute truth to the artist flows from his ability to create values in their own right and masterpieces which survive over centuries retaining their charm for and influence on succeeding generations. The classics have always raised questions that were coming to a head and have sought to provoke reflection. They are marked by active search for truth. Great artists have always taken an active attitude towards reality. That is why revolutionary romantics had such a powerful influence on the masses.

To interpret the whole range of human being, art has produced its own instruments of objectifying reality, which include the most diverse forms of generalisation and con-

vention. Art develops along with reality, and every method and trend in art produces its own forms of generalisation.

The subjective element, like various conventions in art, is taking on ever greater importance as it reveals the individual's ability to grasp the surrounding world and the processes going on in it. The latest achievements in science and technology provide art with inexhaustible means of cognition, complicate still more the forms of artistic convention, and are used by artists to give the shape of objective truth to their subjective ideas. The subjective element in art and the forms of convention can vary greatly even as fantasies, dreams and illusions can vary. They can be a vehicle of cognition aimed at improving the individual, or a form of exploiting the human spirit towards the most repugnant of ends (which is done, for example, by contemporary reactionary art).

That is what makes a concrete approach to defining artistic truth so important. Truth is always concrete and in a class society it is always regarded in class terms. The work of an artist, determined by the socio-historical conditions, is diverse and takes many forms, just like everchanging life.

II

There may be different approaches to the problem of artistic truth which deal both with the general aesthetic questions (the relationship between scientific and artistic cognition, methods of typifying and forms in which art reflects the truth, the influences on artistic consciousness, etc.), as well as concrete methodological questions (the role of a world view in artistic work, the relationship between the facts and the truth of history, the role of fiction, the historicity of the artist's thinking and comprehensiveness of the picture he draws, and the like). The difficulty is that whatever problems we take up the general should not be divorced from the concrete and concrete problems should be solved in the context of general ones.

Artistic interpretation of reality is a dialectical process in which many factors interact. Artistic truth is reflected in art in a special way at every stage of social development depending on the method, direction, and genre of a given work. It cannot be isolated from the work as a set of ideas,

nor could it be reduced to verisimilitude of characters, situations, and conflicts *per se*. Artistic truth is life's truth aesthetically interpreted. It is not something particular, but an integral reflection. It is a result of cognition set down in a work of art. Artistic truth is hard to pin down in terms of specific features if it is approached in an abstract way. It could then vanish as an object of study. But it becomes tangible and is revealed in all its diversity and richness if approached concretely. Then it will be perceived as the gist of the artist's interpretation of reality, as a kind of element which only seems to disappear, dissolving in artistic imagery and in the texture of the work, but in fact taking on a new quality, and influencing the artistic structure, lending it a particular flavour. That is why it is so important to find a correct approach to the study and definition of artistic truth.

It is my conviction that we would never solve the question of artistic truth unless we become aware of the typical. That at once takes us into the domain of the inner laws of artistic work and makes us analyse them not as a closed immanent set but in their complex interdependence with the general laws of artistic interpretation of reality, which every time manifest themselves in specific forms.

The typical exists in life as a form of the concrete *independently* of the artist. The cognition of the typical starts with the selection of facts. It is at once an act of typification and an act of cognition. No matter how diverse are the forms of typification in realistic art (and when I speak of typification I refer above all to realistic forms of generalisation), they begin with the selection of facts (or impressions of them) on the strength of their significance and distinction (of the important from the secondary, the essential from non-essential, of accidental from non-accidental, and so on). That already reveals the interdependence between the typical and the artistic truth, and between typification and the means of artistic discovery of the truth.

A typical character is always a result of interaction between the objective essence of a phenomenon of life with the artist's subjective perception of it. The artist may or may not reveal the typical depending on his approach to the phenomenon. He may notice the typical, "grasp" it but he may not have it in him (he may not be equipped with enough talent, craft, even experience or

creative inspiration) to embody it in an image. In such cases artistic truth is a qualitative side of cognition which requires not only a correct view of life but also an aesthetic interpretation and artistic revelation (the principle of the unity of form and content). If that side is neglected the artist's best intentions may come to grief.

The typical in life is always concrete (being a sphere of the characteristic). And so it is diverse as life is diverse and is constantly changing and developing, requiring new forms of typification.

The typical is manifested in a different way in every kind and genre of art, also depending on which side of life the artist portrays and in what form and how he embodies the characteristic, with what depth he penetrates into the essence of phenomena and what attracts his attention in them. "Whether he gives wisdom to marble or gives life to stone," whether he uses an evocative word or moves one with a special arrangement of sounds and colours, what mood does he try to create and what is the crux of his work? That accounts for the diversity of styles and methods. In the cognition of the typical there is always a specific reflection of the relationship between the subjective and the objective. And the specific conditions are "the reference point" for artistic truth.

I will emphasise elsewhere the importance for artistic truth of the depth of insight into phenomena and of the fullness of portrayal. One must be aware of the complex dialectic of life, distinguish the important from the secondary, perceive the interdependence of facts, see the unusual in the usual, and vice versa, and rise to large-scale generalisations.

The typical is always a discovery. It can be maintained that the main aim of the writer is to create artistic types which distill historically significant phenomena. This is the ultimate goal of all the creative endeavours and searches of the writer. The writer concentrates the results of his reflections, searches, and labours in a type which in his view should give an idea of social relations, social being, and the potentials of the individual. That reveals the link between art and society history. Literary types created by great writers enable us to trace the concrete evolution of an epoch, give us a vivid picture of the stages of social development, the evolution of the human individual, his destiny,

and at the same time the innovation made by Russian realism. Remember Gorky's succinct definition of type: "The type is the phenomenon of a time."¹ The typical character reflects in a unique form the unity of the social and the universally human, of the particular (concrete historical) and the universally relevant. The force of artistic talent reveals the typical, portrays it in images, and asserts it as the truth of the age.

This is tangible evidence of the interdependence between the typical and the artistic truth. The typical in life and the forms in which it is expressed, generalisations in art (which are diverse and changing) lend originality to artistic interpretation of reality and, on the whole, to artistic truth. In the sphere of the typical the ability of literature, theatre and the cinema to discover truth and record it in their media is manifested with particular force.

To get a clearer idea of the interconnection between the typical and the artistic truth (hence also their essence) one must conceive of the process of interpreting reality as an integral process that is at the same time as contradictory, and with a dialectic of its own.

The key to solving that question is, of course, provided by Lenin's thesis about the unity of analysis and synthesis. That unity marks all the stages of cognition, helping the artist to overcome the contradiction between the particular and the general, which also are represented in their dialectical interconnection in every fact and phenomenon (I have more to say on the unity of the synthetic and analytical methods of thought elsewhere in this study).

But here is a general law of cognition which was noted by Lenin: "From building perception to abstract thought, *and from this to practice*,—such is the dialectical path of the cognition of *truth*, of the cognition of objective reality."²

That law is relevant also to forms of artistic cognition and gives us better insight into the specific ways in which truth is discovered by the artist. One can speak of different forms of generalisation in art as a specific feature of artistic truth. Let us single out just one side of it.

¹ Maxim Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 26, Moscow, 1953, p. 64 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 171.

The path of generalisation is that of separating art from reality. This takes different forms. It manifests itself at the first stage of creation when the artist singles out and records what he believes to be most important and characteristic out of the diversity of facts, phenomena, and conflicts, and the chaos of everyday life. That stage, at which the artist searches for the typical and the characteristic, reveals to the greatest degree the dependence of the artist's subjective notions on reality. And that has a beneficial effect on his work and the conception. The contradictions between the particular and the general, the individual and the universal, which inevitably arise when the artist selects facts, reflects on phenomena, and looks for the characteristic and the typical, are resolved in favour of the universally relevant. One need hardly say that to do that the artist must have deep knowledge of life, intellectual audacity, and an advanced world outlook.

The process of artistic interpretation of reality does not end there, however. That is only its first stage, and a prelude to a more responsible and important stage when the artist creates his own particular world of images. That world has all the hallmarks of authenticity, is seething with passions, and explosive contradictions. It is peopled by flesh-and-blood heroes, each revealing a distinct individuality. At the same time, that world is permeated with light, imbued with the artist's feelings and so offers us a far more vivid picture than a straightforward historical description.

Lev Tolstoy referred to it as the process of overcoming the chaos of the world. The artist, by dint of his creative intelligence and insight into essence, arranges his disparate impressions into a harmonious whole. And the work is structured in accordance with the principle of harmony and reflects the infinite diversity of the world. "The main quality of all art is a sense of proportion... That sense of proportion which very few artists acquire by hard work and study," wrote Lev Tolstoy.¹ At that stage the inner laws of art are raised in high relief: they are the unity of form and content, the correspondence of the forms of typification with characteristic phenomena, the genuineness of feeling, thought, and behaviour of the characters, the authenticity

¹ *Russian Writers on Literary Work*, Vol. 3, Leningrad, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1955, p. 531 (in Russian).

of detail and setting—all that goes to make artistic truth.

At that stage in the creative art the tendency of art to separate from reality is particularly marked—it seeks not only to “withdraw” into its world of imagery, where the dependence of art on life is always felt (as Chernyshevsky has proved, the influence of life is always manifested in every thing an artist creates), but also to rise above reality and assert a seeming independence of creativity as the distinctive quality of art. This brings us to the different forms of relationship between the subjective and the objective in artistic work, where contradictions inevitably arise, with their strong and weak sides. The *strong sides* are revealed when art, drawing on the highest achievements of its time, including philosophy and history, is able to discover truths independently and express them in a particular form. The works of art that have the mark of genius are ahead of their time without being divorced from it but penetrating into its secrets. The sphere of artistic truth is the realisation of the artist’s creativity and his advanced revolutionary ideas of the world. Artistic truth can be expressed in very diverse modes, ranging from Dante’s fantasies in the *Divine Comedy* to Rabelais’ grotesques in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, from the popular myths about Prometheus, Vasilisa the Beautiful, and Faust to the philosophical poems of Milton, from the romantic dreams of Victor Hugo to the realistic panorama of Balzac in *The Human Comedy*. The main criterion of artistic truth in all these cases is the general requirement that the author’s concept, expressed through imagery, should correspond to historical truth and the historical tendency of his time. We look at all the component of the work not in terms of verisimilitude (“Art does not require the recognition of its works as *reality*,” stresses Lenin¹), but in terms of the depth and fullness of content, artistic perfection in expressing the author’s overall concept. The truth of fiction, which is a form of interaction between the subjective and the objective is, in general terms, the criterion of artistic truth.²

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 73.

² This led Engels to describe the tales of Faust, with the quest of truth and freedom of spirit, as “the most profound that the folk poetry of any people has to show”, and to regard their meaning as inexhaustible: “any period can adopt them without altering their essence” (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 35).

There may, however, be weaknesses resulting from art's divorcement from reality. They manifest themselves when the links with life are snapped and when the structure of images, contrary to the laws of art, is violently distorted, as in abstract art, and is turned into signs and unintelligible symbols. In that case the artist's subjective notions are at odds with the truth of life. Moreover, they are in flagrant contradiction with it and provide a vehicle either for the artist's misconceptions or, still worse, for perversion of reality and glossing over its ugly sides. These features of art are exploited by the decadent modernistic trends.

The laws of artistic truth in realistic art encourage the strong sides of artistic creativity, helping the artist to stay in touch with changing reality and to find adequate forms for expressing his sober aspirations and discoveries—in short, while being subjective and personal, they become objective truth in a work of art.

Thus the typical is the nucleus of artistic truth. It begins and concludes the process of artistic interpretation of reality. It contains the energy of cognition. The typical enables us to trace the link between artistic creation and reality. Artistic truth is expressed in a specific form in each concrete work and it performs two main functions: it is a stage in interpreting reality and artistic self-consciousness. It manifests the ability of art to make independent discovery of the truth and to produce ever new means of interpreting reality.

Let us now try to clarify another notion, the notion of "truthfulness" as distinct from the related notion of "artistic truth". These are close but not identical notions. "Truthfulness" should be defined as the sum of devices designed to give shape to the artist's perception of reality, lend them harmony and completeness and make characters and situations convincing. It is the sphere of convention.

In this sphere the verisimilitude laws are valid (the correspondence of the characters' feelings, thoughts, and acts to their psychological mould and the situation in which they find themselves), truthfulness in describing circumstances (even if they are fantastic they must be truthful in their exclusiveness, as in Lermontov's *Demon*), relevance of the situations in the overall pattern of the work, the correspondence of style to content, etc. Every method, style, trend, and genre produces its own set of devices and its own

"truthfulness". Reactionary writers in anti-realistic works make use of the laws of verisimilitude (faithful portrayal of detail and plausibility of characters and situations) to give a semblance of reality to their false ideas. The truth of life is then in flagrant contradiction with the "artistic truth" which reactionary writers try to impose on their reader. The more talented the artist, the more vivid characters he can draw (characters, that is, which make sense in terms of psychology), the more entertaining the situations and conflicts and the greater their hold on the reader due to the illusion of truthfulness. Then reactionary ideas, and perverted and alien notions of morality and human behaviour can become convincing and affect the minds and hearts of men. Thus "artistic truth" becomes artistic untruth if it is reduced to a set of artistic devices.

Verisimilitude (faithfulness to isolated facts without an understanding of their essence and historical significance) lies at the basis of the aesthetics of naturalism. It rules out the artist's active role in extracting from life that which is characteristic and universally relevant, reducing artistic work to copying of facts which in the final analysis deprives art of its specific means of cognition.

All major realists—from Pushkin to Stanislavsky—were against supplanting of truthfulness by verisimilitude. Their hearts were moved by Truth and not by "little truth". They passionately looked for and found new latent potential in art for expressing the larger historical meaning behind the facts of human life.

In Pushkin's opinion, the nature of dramatic art, for example, rules out external verisimilitude: "...apart from time, place, etc., what on earth is verisimilitude in a hall divided into two parts, of which one is occupied by 2,000 people supposed to be invisible for those who are on the stage..."¹ As Pushkin saw it, "real geniuses of tragedy were concerned only with the truth of characters and situations".²

Goethe in his article "Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke" ("On Truth and Verisimilitude") (1798) upheld the notion of artistic truth as the discovery

¹ A. S. Pushkin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Moscow, 1950, p. 119 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

of *truth* which condenses what is important in life, its genuine significance. And he put that truth above verisimilitude believing that in copying life or creating an illusion of beauty the artist forgets about the lofty mission of art.

Pushkin has given us this laconic definition of the realistic principles of typification: "The truth of passions and authenticity of feelings in the circumstances offered—this is what our mind demands from the dramatist."¹ It has often been pointed out that this definition is similar to the formula of Engels: "...Realism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances."² Pushkin liked to say that "intelligent people think on the same lines". Unwittingly, the two men of genius spoke about the same thing. They gave expression to the objective laws of creativity with a clarity that is a result of profound knowledge of facts.

The formula of Engels is deeply meaningful. It expresses three laws of typification: the creation of typical characters (the type should express the conception of an individual, the views of the artist on the real position of the individual in society, and the aim and meaning of his life); analysis of typical circumstances (real social relations, contradictions and conflicts) and truthful description of the circumstances of life, the minutiae of the situation, the family, economic, and legal relations. If one recalls that, in determining the main features of the art of the future, Engels emphasises the need to combine conscious historical depth with vivid depiction of reality and topicality (actuality) of the work, it will be clear that Engels's formula (typical characters under typical circumstances, plus truth of detail) contains the main criterion of artistic truth. According to Engels, the artist discovers artistic truth through cognition and generalisation of historically significant phenomena. This is seen from his reaction to the story of Margaret Harkness "A City Girl" (he described the story as a sign of "the courage of the true artist"³) and from his letter to Marx's daughter Laura Lafargue of December 13, 1883, in which he re-emphasised that French history from 1815 to 1848 was more extensively represented in the novels by

¹ Ibid., p. 160.

² K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, p. 401.

³ Ibid.

Balzac than in special historical studies. Engels regarded that as the merit of the artist and admired his genius: "And what boldness! What revolutionary dialectic and his poetic judgement!"¹ Engels proceeded from a deep knowledge of the laws of art. He pinpointed the essence of artistic truth in connection with the typical and established the principles of realism, which we consider as laws of realistic typification enabling the artist to achieve truthfulness both in depicting real facts and in conveying his perception of them.

And there again we see the dialectical interconnection between the typical, artistic truth, and the laws of its manifestation in different arts.

III

Looking at the gallery of types created by Russian writers we see, on the one hand, that they reflected the specific traits of the life of Russian society at one of its most characteristic periods (it is not for nothing that Belinsky described Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* as "an encyclopaedia of Russian life"). Yet, on the other hand, they were discoveries whose impact on public consciousness was comparable to great scientific discoveries. Lenin wrote, for example, that Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* had transformed his mind. Speaking about the influence of *Eugene Onegin* on Russian society, Belinsky stressed that it was "an act of the consciousness of Russian society, almost its first but a gigantic stride!... It was a mighty exploit and after it standing still was no longer possible..."² One is also reminded of Lenin's high assessment of Tolstoy: "The epoch of preparation for revolution in one of the countries under the heel of the serfowners became, thanks to its brilliant illustration by Tolstoy, a step forward in the artistic development of humanity as a whole."³

The history of Russian realism offers examples galore of artistic truth expressed in specific form, of uniquely original discoveries. The achievements of the classics are the

¹ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Werke*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, Bd. 36, S. 75.

² V. G. Belinsky, *Collected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1948, p. 556 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 323.

tradition on which Soviet art builds in its endeavour to give truthful depiction of reality.

Strictly speaking, the history of Russian realism is one of elaboration of new methods of expressiveness for the purpose of more truthful artistic analysis of historical processes. On the one hand, that brought art closer to new reality. On the other hand, it demanded that the artist should be "equal to his time", i.e., should look at the new (and consequently, the old) elements in life from the vantage point of history, which gives the power of foresight. Historicity marked the thinking of Pushkin, Gogol, Nekrasov, and Tolstoy. Because literature in 19th-century Russia was the focus of all advanced searches, it fell to the writers to discover the truth and assert it, to herald it, and to champion justice in a country ruled by autocracy.

A new aesthetic was born from profound study of the social processes at the juncture between advanced aspirations of the writer and the truth of life. In that sense, Pushkin's works marked a whole epoch in the history of Russian literature and social thought.

Pushkin's realism was marked by attention to the beauty of reality. He noticed in the surrounding world what other artists had failed to notice and made it the subject of his poetry. At the same time, Pushkin's realism was invested with new social relevance compared with his predecessors.

Pushkin in his works addressed himself to all the fundamental issues of his time—the autocracy, serfdom, the peasant revolution, freedom, and human dignity. The more pronounced the political, philosophical, and moral message of his work the clearer was the plot anchored in real life.

Suffice it to mention *Dubrovsky*, which was prompted by documentary facts of a peasant revolt over an unjust court verdict. Pushkin included in the narrative an authentic document, the ruling of the court of the Kozlov District in the case of Lieutenant Muratov and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Guards, Kryukov. He merely changed their names. *The Story of the Village of Goryukhino* has the form of an essay, a simple and unassuming description of what the author learnt living in the village, with economic observations, records of events, and description of everyday affairs. And Pushkin displayed remarkable skill in weaving historical facts of the Pugachev uprising into *The Captain's Daughter*, facts which he had carefully studied before

writing that story.

Pushkin's prose is generally very attentive to facts and events, switching quickly from one external feature of an object or phenomenon to another. D. Blagoy notes: "Sometimes a single word, a single deft epithet draws a complete picture."¹ And he goes on to cite an example from *Peter the Great's Abyssinian Servant*. During an assembly, Peter plays chess with an English ship captain in a room adjoining the "dancing hall". "They diligently *saluted* each other with *salvoes* of tobacco smoke...", writes Pushkin, and the reader is given a tangible picture. One could cite any number of such examples in Pushkin's work.

Pushkin does not describe the character's psychological state. He draws a situation emphasising characteristic features with particularly expressive words. He passes on imperceptibly from the trivial to the extraordinary, which is most readily apparent in *The Undertaker*, *The Snow Storm* and *The Shot*. Every event in them complements another and creates inner tension. Pushkin's prose is psychological in a special way, relying on action, dynamism and polysemy. In Pushkin's writings a lot of thought is compressed in a minimum of words, and facts take on enormous significance. This is due to his particular skill in selecting facts and events, and relating them to one another, which means composition of images which are physically concrete and at the same time profoundly generalised and typical. On the whole the narrative pictures are always true to real life (a characteristic fact, event or incident) and at the same time is permeated with thought and warmed with personal feeling. Facts are seen from unusual angles. Brevity, concreteness and artistic universality lend a special polysemy to the texture of images in Pushkin's prose. There is always more to the images than meets the eye. Every word carries great weight and the whole system of expressive means is taxed heavily. In the general dynamic structure of a story seemingly simple, ordinary words and clear-cut sentences acquire a new meaning, becoming an image expressive of supremely important and historically significant idea: "...it's not likely that your people live as well as your dogs" (*Dubrovsky*); "Trishka was whipped ... according to weath-

¹ D. Blagoy, *The Creative Path of Pushkin (1826-1830)*, Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1967, p. 266 (in Russian).

er" (*The Story of the Village of Goryukhino*); "There is not enough ... freedom" (*The Captain's Daughter*); "When I punish someone I punish him, when I pardon I pardon him" (*The Captain's Daughter*).

Pushkin's long and short stories are classical specimens of prose, unsurpassed in beauty and depth. It is not by chance that Lev Tolstoy admired it so much.

In grasping the characteristic phenomena of life, in interpreting and typifying them, Pushkin was not only "in step with his century", he was ahead of it. He prefigured the future of history and found new forms of expression for his perceptions of the world. His tragedy *Boris Godunov* is innovatory in every respect (in its ideas and principles of typification).

For example, the people is portrayed in *Boris Godunov* as a force deciding the destiny of the autocrat and the outcome of events, as the repository of all the historical and moral values. "The people's opinions" rule the world, and at the same time the people's position is tragic because it has not yet become aware of its strength and usurpers use it to their own ends. Even so, it is a formidable force. It took for a great genius to grasp the epoch's main feature and reveal that historical truth in artistic form. For one must remember that *Boris Godunov* was written in 1825, eight weeks before the Decembrist uprising. The play shows that a quarter of a century before the famous letter of Engels to Lassalle, Pushkin, drawing on Russian material, attempted to combine historical depth with Shakespearean vividness and compelling depiction of characters (Pushkin quite consciously formulated the latter two tasks and tackled them while working on *Boris Godunov*). Pushkin was ahead of his time both philosophically and aesthetically. His *Boris Godunov* was so original, terse, dynamic in its succession of scenes and psychological intensity that to this day no stage production has done it full justice as far as perception of the idea, content and form, and expressiveness of acting are concerned.

Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* is an even greater miracle of combining the concrete and the general and of poeticising reality. Philosophical depth, factual knowledge, and powerful abstract thought enabled the artist to create a work whose poetic perfection does not fade with time. Quite the contrary, as history progresses, the magnitude of

the ideas and the innovatory aesthetic principles of *The Bronze Horseman* are increasingly revealed to us. When there was a discussion on the genre of the long poem in the Soviet Union in 1966, some voices were heard calling "back to *The Bronze Horseman*" (perhaps one had better say, "forward to *The Bronze Horseman*"), and that was not a paradox but tribute to the unrivalled poetic and philosophical power of Pushkin's genius.

The Bronze Horseman is a brilliant example which shows that a realistic approach to one's time and realistic principles of typification, far from constraining the artist's freedom, enable him to resort to various devices and to combine reality and fantasy. They enabled the poet to look into the innermost recesses of the soul of a petty downtrodden clerk, Yevgeny, and at the same time to make profound generalisations in depicting "the cause of Peter" as a statesman. They enabled Pushkin to give a factually authentic description of the situation in St. Petersburg during the flood of 1824, the everyday life of Yevgeny and Parasha, and to invest the work with genuine drama and build up a sense of tragedy, bringing his hero to a mentally befuddled state as he confronts the "idol on a bronze horse" and utters, in a kind of madness ("wild eyed, his fingers clenched, the grim and haughty Idol, sullen, facing"), the words which, historically, presaged the future upheavals: "Just wait and see! "

I do not propose to discuss here the conventions of the images and poetic devices used in *The Bronze Horseman*. But let me note the special kind of generalisation in it. It is objective, historically concrete, and conventional at the same time. Pushkin judges phenomena from all sides, describes them with all their complexity, contradictions, and historical implications. He keeps to a certain angle in perceiving the complex nature of his time. An example is the city which Peter the Great built on the Neva river. It is above all a symbol of the life work of Peter ("Peter's creation"), a symbol of progress. Pushkin admires Peter's city and his sympathies are on the side of progress. But St. Petersburg is also a symbol of the sufferings of a small person, Yevgeny, with whom Pushkin is in sympathy. There is a clash of two elements which has its roots in reality. An individual is at the mercy of ungovernable elements. The city has been built in a "wretched place" where an individ-

ual cannot be happy. The objective, historically concrete and at the same time conventional structure of imagery enables the author to give a panoramic view of a phenomenon and make his picture capable of interpretation at many levels. A real situation (flood) leads to some important general statements and at times gives way to fantastic situations, as when Yevgeny confronts Peter, the "idol on a bronze horse". The poem interweaves reality and fantasy. Images realistically drawn acquire a new dimension and begin to live a different life. The poet realistically motivates the switch in his imagery by Yevgeny's madness. The world is seen from a new angle, everything in it is fancifully displaced. For a moment it seems that nothing but fantasy remains, that the real world disappears and the characters become ghostly. Yevgeny is haunted by the ghost of Peter, and himself becomes like an apparition: "No man, no beast, no phantom, truly, and yet no living soul..." And the poet lets fall a lyrical remark which has a philosophical ring and provides us with a key to understanding his world view and the features of his poetic style: "Was this a dream or was our life another of Heaven's jest at man's expense..."

But what marks Pushkin's realistic poetry with genius is that the reader does not notice the switch to the world of fantasy. The more irrational the events become as the poet shifts real images into the world of Yevgeny's fantastic visions the more vividly and tangibly the hidden essence of the images is revealed. The fantastic perception of the world through Yevgeny's "beclouded consciousness" is not at all irrational. Ghostly images and extraordinary situations are invested with great historical meaning and acquire a new artistic reality.

The images do not cease to be concrete and objective. Only they acquire a greater general meaning serving to point up their inherent contradictions. Take, for instance, the figure of Peter. Peter appears as a living person only in the beginning of the poem: "When lonely waters, struggling, sought to reach the sea, *he* paused, in thought immersed, and gazed ahead." Subsequently his image takes on a double, even a triple extent. On the one hand, he becomes more of a physical presence. Peter appears as a monument, a sculpture (which means an image re-interpreted). And then he appears as a ghost pursuing Yevgeny. But in the process the image becomes more conventional and generalised,

enabling the poet to dramatise the inherent contradictions of Peter. He is depicted as the maker of destinies, "a most wondrous" builder who has accomplished a great feat— "he has made Russia rear up" and launched it on the road of progress. Yet at the same time he is presented as a "haughty Idol", "the sovereign great", as one "who had in sway held half the world, in awe directed", who did not only disregard the interests of an individual in carrying out his reforms, but was a ruthless and often cruel ruler. There was a reactionary anti-humane element to his might. The contradictory essence of Peter is most powerfully revealed during the confrontation between Yevgeny and Peter, symbolising a clash between an individual and the course of history. That clash, fantastic in form, brings out with the greatest dramatic force the historical meaning inherent in the images.

The character of Yevgeny, symbolising the fate of an individual in a historical process, takes on a generalised meaning despite the fact that it is depicted in Pushkin's strictly realistic manner. Pushkin endows that "little man" with an unusual destiny and takes him from his everyday surroundings into a fantastic situation to show the awakening of his consciousness as he confronts the man who has caused his misfortunes. Of course Pushkin could not have achieved that being purely true to life. So he resorts to convention depicting a particular state—the hero's muddled mind, followed by sudden revelation—and gives a fantastic picture of Yevgeny's confrontation with Peter.

*Yevgeni shivered. Anew there bound him
The old, consuming, cruel pain.
With lucid mind he saw again
The waves, rapacious, press around him
And hiss and roar in spite. He knew
The square, the house, the lions too,
And him who towered, by murk surrounded,
Above them all, detached and still,
One who, Fate bowing to his will,
The city on the sea had founded..*

The world is strictly material and at the same time irrational just as the challenge which Yevgeny hurls at Peter. It is a very special kind of convention. Everything becomes symbolic, but we do not notice it. Everything seems realistic

to us because we are carried away by the character's emotional state and are concerned not only with his particular destiny but with something larger which has to do with forms of consciousness and the behaviour of the individual characteristic of a whole historical period.

The world of Yevgeny's emotions and thoughts, and his behaviour are determined by a complex of conflicting motives. In his normal state, when his mind is confined to everyday concern, he cannot rise to an understanding of who is to blame for his misfortunes. In such a situation the message of the poem cannot be revealed. It takes for a special mental state in Yevgeny to change his perception of the world in which he lives so that it becomes different in outline. Only then can the little man rise above the flow of everyday life and see the world in a different light, pierce "the distance of centuries" and become aware of the truth. And then the main idea of the poem comes through in the complex historical lighting due to the intersection of different planes and images, and feelings and thoughts of Yevgeny. Pushkin gives a dramatic description of his hero's state.

*Around the pedestal, dejected,
Poor, sick Yevgeny made his way,
His gaze on him who had in sway
Held half the world in awe directed.
His chest felt tight. Against a grille
He pressed his burning face, but still
His blood flamed and his heart went racing
And pounding madly... Weak of limb,
Wild-eyed, his fingers clenched, the grim
And haughty Idol, sullen, facing
Like one possessed, he, trembling, stood...*

And then follow the lines which we have already quoted. They begin with the desolate little man's challenge to the "haughty Idol": "Just wait and see! "

Only that situation gave the poet insight into the profound mystery of an individual's fate and the meaning of his revolt. Although Yevgeny's revolt in Pushkin's time was not realistic, his words are. And so are Yevgeny's reaction, his "challenge", and his awareness of the autocrat's power, "thunderous pursuit" and the formidable might of the

“dreaded Bronze Horseman”: “Till morn, where’er Yevge-ny, frighted did bend his steps and wander, mute, the fell Bronze Horseman rode, benighted, in mad, in thunderous pursuit.” The conventions in that situation are designed to bring out the essence of phenomena with the greatest force.

Pushkin’s poem thus acquires profound philosophical meaning. As early as 1833 Pushkin did not only point out the glaring contradictions between the interests of the individual and the state in the time of autocracy but used a novel poetic form to bring home the need for removing these contradictions. The poet’s thought was both historical and dialectical. His whole poem is informed not only with the sense of the need for progress and a sober view of “Peter’s cause” but also with profound humanistic and freedom-loving feeling, the great awareness of the interests of a suffering individual and the need to seek harmony between the interests of the individual and the state. According to Pushkin, that was the road to complete freedom of the individual.

To borrow Engels’ words, Pushkin displayed a “revolutionary dialectic of poetic judgement” in upholding the freedom of the individual as the main goal of historical progress.

Pushkin thought ahead of his time and that enabled him to invest his historically concrete images with great philosophical meaning, to express the historical truth and create a work which is relevant to this day.

In art, as in life, the new has to fight its way to recognition. The new which is being born in literature need not necessarily surpass preceding specimens intellectually or aesthetically. One can go along with the Soviet literary scholar M. Khrapchenko, who argues that mechanistic measurement of artistic values is futile and that one should take into account all the specific features of a work.¹ Every work of genius is unsurpassed in its perfection. However, genuinely innovatory works, even though they may not quite rise to the pinnacles of the art of the past, set new trends and pave the way for the principles of depiction which mark new stages in the development of realism. That process is of

¹ See M. B. Khrapchenko, *The Creative Individuality of a Writer and the Development of Literature*, Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1972, pp. 291, 292 (in Russian).

course predetermined by the concrete historical conditions. Basically, it is the process of bringing art closer to the new phenomena in life. The process, however, does not happen by itself; it demands discoveries in the material, philosophical, moral, and aesthetic fields. A new historic trend invades art, demanding to be artistically interpreted.

Why is it that the works of Vladimir Dahl, Dmitry Grigorovich, and Alexei Pisemsky about the life of serfs have survived as the writers' testimony on an important aspect of life but have not been milestones in the development of critical realism? They had a humanistic message, love of fellowmen, and truthful description of individual facts and events. But what they lacked was historic breath, an ability to see beyond the everyday life of the peasant (the mounting popular wrath) and to make generalisations. Besides, Dahl, Grigorovich, and Pisemsky leaned towards Slavophile ideas and tended to idealise the peasants' humility and patience.

Nikolai Nekrasov also started as an exponent of the "naturalist school". His poetry was a landmark in the development of Russian realism.

A decisive factor in Nekrasov's evolution was the influence of the ideas of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, which fostered his talent. Very rapidly, his poetry developed new qualities. Nekrasov turned to important themes, overcame his naturalism, and produced works which evoked great social response. His poem *Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia* breaks new ground in developing realistic methods of typification not only in his own work but in the whole of Russian poetry. Scholars have noted the increased social realism even in the poetic structure of the poem. That resulted in some artistic innovation. The poet not only introduced new themes and took up new material but made them the vehicles for expressing important social and democratic ideas.

The most striking thing about the poem is the scope of the panorama of Russian life.

The whole diversity of life encompassed by the poem—from a peasant hut to a palace, from the peasant (muzhik) to the arrogant ruler—is seen from a certain angle. That lends the poem coherence of idea and expression. It analyses and depicts all events and facts in the light of the basic conflict of the time, the reform of 1861 when "a great

chain has broken and hit the master with one end and the muzhik with the other". Nekrasov is rigorously objective and truthful in the depiction of various sides of life. Entire chapters in the poem represent confessional stories of the different characters about themselves and their life (they include landowners, merchants, and various servants). We are given a clear cross-section of society and the changes the 1861 reform brought to its various strata. In that sense, the images and poetic structure of Nekrasov's poem are realistic and concrete. Paraphrasing the words of Engels about Balzac, one can say that even in the economic and sociological matters (the description of legal and economic relations between peasant and landowner) one could often learn more realistic detail from Nekrasov's poem than from special studies. It is not for nothing that Nekrasov's poem *Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia* is commonly described as the encyclopaedia of peasant life at the time of the 1861 reform.

In the structure of the poem, there is more than just a combination of the song, narrative, and confession found in the individual chapters. Behind all this there is a picture of the life of the people, a sense of the tragic destiny of an individual person and a desire to break out and to free oneself from oppression. The poet speaks on behalf of the people and looks at life through the people's eyes.

The epic quality of *Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia* is of a very special kind because there is a strong element of folklore in it. The poet boldly introduced in his poem the whole range of oral folk poetry—from fantasy to anecdote, riddle, proverb—so that every real fact and incident is regarded in a special light, is typified, proceeding from the concrete to the general. The general—in the image structure of the poem—is also concrete and socially determined. It distills, as is characteristic of the folk perception of life, all the diverse but also the most characteristic aspects of the peasant life of the 1860s. What determines the structure of Nekrasov's poem and its approach to typification is the poet's concern to show the mounting discontent in the midst of the peasant mass which bespeaks the awakening of the people. The poem is suffused with a premonition of storm and poeticises the facts of struggle and awakening of the masses, conveying the growing tensions. Nekrasov's poem has at its focus the images of rebels

from among the people, the peasants who challenge their rulers.

Some of the rebel peasants depicted by Nekrasov can readily be identified with Pushkin's Pugachev as regards strength of character, resource, and boldness (Savely, a *Bogatyr* of Holy Russia, Kudayar and Yermil Girin). There is an essential difference, however, both in the characters and in the way they are portrayed. The leader of the mutinous people in *The Captain's Daughter* by Pushkin is seen through the eyes of Grinev, a man who found himself suddenly plunged in an alien world of the people of which he had very little previous knowledge. So in the structure of *The Captain's Daughter* the figure of Pugachev is illuminated from two different angles, as it were. Along with the poetic view of Pugachev's mysterious and magnetic personality, assertion that the people's wrath is justified and portrayal of the peasant movement, which rocks the foundations of autocracy, there is a different perception of the world which reflects the complex time and the interweaving of class interests during the Pugachev and other peasant rebellions. That other view is expressed in Grinev's words: "God forbid to see a Russian revolt: meaningless and brutal." Of course it would be wrong to ascribe these views wholly to Pushkin, as some vulgar sociologists have done. The poet puts these words in the mouth of Grinev describing his views and his attitude to the peasant revolt. But Grinev has the author's sympathy and one cannot dissociate Pushkin from him; nor can one claim that Pushkin called Russian peasants to take up their axes. The structure of images in *The Captain's Daughter* expressed the contradictions of Pushkin's own views. They told on his attitude to the Pugachev revolt (for all that Pushkin exposed the historical sources and showed the inevitability of a peasant rebellion) and on his idea of the ways to struggle for justice and proposed remedies to social ills. Pushkin sought for humane ways and he was drawn to the ideas of enlightened humanism. The image system in *The Captain's Daughter* bears proof of that. It does not only reflect the contradictions of the first stage of the liberation movement in Russia (the noblemen revolutionaries) but also a complex relationship between the advanced literary trends of the Pushkin time with the prevalent social trends.

Nekrasov's poem is steeped in the life of the peasants to a

far greater extent than Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*. It depicts the mounting popular discontent and the social tensions at a new stage.

The poetry of wrath and sorrow is imbued with a sense of coming revolutionary storm. It is a new kind of poetry directly linked with the people's life and the mentality and feelings of the peasants. That determines many of the artistic features of *Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia*. It reflects with new force and in an original poetic form the life of the people and the consciousness of the people of the 1860s.

To begin with, the popular mentality is reflected in the images of the rebels, the "champions of the people", who, as I have said, form the focus of the poem. Secondly, that mentality becomes the basis of the whole concept of the poem, reflecting the author's philosophy, imbued with a stark rejection of the autocracy and a poeticised view of the growing popular discontent. It asserts rebellion as the only means to free the people from their sufferings. One need hardly remind the reader that this philosophy was predominant throughout a whole period in the history of the liberation movement in Russia, the revolutionary-democratic period. Thirdly, the poetics of Nekrasov's poem revealed the aesthetic power latent in the folk art tradition.

Nekrasov's poem marked a further step in bringing art closer to the life of the grassroots. And that lent new strength to realism. The mounting popular discontent reflected in the poem emphasised the critical element of realism. A new quality appears in realism, that of wrathful exposure. Satire plays an important role in Nekrasov's poem. The object of satire is clear as is the poet's ideal. One can say that the biting sarcasm, and the exposure and rejection of the wickedness of serfdom and autocracy are in Nekrasov's poem proportionate to his allegiance to a positive ideal. That is very characteristic of Russian realism. Nekrasov identified and poeticised the real proponents of the revolution: Savely the *Bogatyr* of Holy Russia and Grisha Dobrosklonov, a Champion of the People. Nekrasov's poem remained unfinished. But its final chapters and sketches of Grisha Dobrosklonov (modelled on Dobrolyubov) show that Nekrasov in his poem tried to express the guiding idea of his age—he dreamt of a union between revolutionary democrats and the peasant movement. And that was the abiding

idea of Russian realism for half a century.

Active interest in life, a passionate search of the truth, and a desire to tell the truth to the people—all these characteristic features of Russian realism were manifested at a new stage of social development, the stage which followed the abolition of serfdom and preceded the revolution.

The work of Lev Tolstoy was a summit of realism not only because he gave a broad picture of reality but also because he raised the most urgent problems of his time and probed into the depths of man's emotional world. Tolstoy elaborated a new artistic system which enabled him to penetrate into the secret corners of life which no one had penetrated before him. Dialectic became the basis of Tolstoy's artistic method.

One need hardly speak here about the sources of the poetic dialectic which is the hallmark of Tolstoy's work. The method and style of Tolstoy have been widely studied by Soviet literary scholars including such books as *Tolstoy the Artist* by M. Khrapchenko, *Anna Karenina* by V. Ermilov, *Ideas and Style* by A. Chicherin. It will suffice for our purpose to underline the psychological acuity and power of Tolstoy's realism and his ability to reveal not only human emotions ("the dialectic of the soul") but also the social contradictions of the time in all their dialectical complexity.

Tolstoy directed his genius to look at a sphere of man's life where, it would seem, the mounting and aggravating contradictions of the post-reform and pre-revolutionary period were most difficult to trace. Tolstoy turned his attention to the moral world of the individual with all the complex psychological, private, social, and universally human qualities of a concrete individual. That lies at the root of the innovatory features of Tolstoy's realism and his psychological insights.

It would be wrong to assume that the artistic significance of Tolstoy's characters is due mainly to the universally human element in them which manifests itself irrespective of circumstances, social barriers, and aims of life. Of course Tolstoy's realistic psychological prose lays great emphasis on the universal human qualities of individuals. Tolstoy identified himself with Rousseau's view that man is inherently good by birth. But he was also aware of the other part of Rousseau's formula which said that the environment made man evil. At the same time Tolstoy, unlike decadent writers,

believed in the triumph of genuine humanity in man and thought it was the artist's calling to work towards that triumph. The significance of Tolstoy's humanism and his characters lies precisely in the fact that for all the contradictions in the views of the author, the universally human qualities were invested with social significance.

The dialectic nature of Tolstoy's work shows both in his analysis of the inner states of his characters and in his analysis of the circumstances, situations, and tragic clashes. In his best works, he achieved amazing completeness and harmony. He achieved what no artist before him had achieved to quite the same degree: in every concrete instance he found in the "dialectic" of the character's soul reflections of the complex social phenomena, the circumstances that determine the destiny of man, his feelings, thoughts, and acts.

There is an indirect link in Tolstoy's works between the emotions of the heroes and the contradictions of life. It is a feature of Tolstoy's style that the feelings of the characters evolve and are illumined by the author's profound reflections on man's mission on earth. Circumstances are also shown in their evolution, in the interaction of conflicting forces which permeate the texture of the work like biocurrents (these traditions of Tolstoy are maintained by the Soviet writers). The sentiments and acts of the characters in Tolstoy's works are always motivated by circumstances and are always portrayed as an interweaving of individual, social, and universally human aspects. There is always an awareness of the concrete as well as universally human (as has already been shown by Soviet scholars who have analysed *War and Peace*, *Hadji Murat*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Resurrection*).

Thus, the inner world of Tolstoy's characters reflects all the contradictions of the time. It is by no means removed from the social contradictions and the circumstances of life. The "dialectic of the soul" of Tolstoy's favourite heroes is full of seething passion and conflicting emotions. Tolstoy usually shows the moral upheavals of the individual in all their complexity against the background of social cataclysms, which lends them profound general meaning. The contradictory experiences that rent apart the hearts of his heroes, and the contradictions of life crisscross like magnetic fields transforming the characters' feelings and power-

fully affecting the reader. "The dialectic of the soul" and the sentiments of the hero are, in Tolstoy's case, revealed at the highest dialectical level of his time, to use Hegel's language. The time—with its glaring contradictions—is seen in Tolstoy's characters like in magic crystals. Suffice it to mention *Anna Karenina* with the famous phrase "Everything has been overturned and is settling in" or *Resurrection*: "Everything is as it is, everything is always as it is," thinks Nekhlyudov. "And that is terrible, and it cannot be and must not be."

Tolstoy developed a system of broad and many-levelled depiction of life to convey its dialectic through the contradictory feelings of his heroes. To this goal he committed the full-flowing narrative with parallel lines; the ramified inner monologue which conveyed the natural flow of the hero's feelings and thoughts; and the meaningful interconnection of details, the linking of disparate, contradictory, and polar phenomena and motives in which one always feels the throbbing pulse of life.

Tolstoy advanced naturalness as the criterion of artistic truth. He was a fierce opponent of any forms of superficial "conventions" and championed simplicity and authenticity of situations and characters. In his view, artifice leads to aesthetic feeling being supplanted by affectation. He came out for a harmonious blend of the truth of life and the truth of art. A. Chicherin in his book *Ideas and Style* brilliantly demonstrated how the requirement of naturalness and simplicity—in combination with complex artistic tasks—led Tolstoy to evolve a new style in which the dialectic of life was reflected in a singularly concrete and diverse way.¹ Tolstoy's novels are a mirror reflecting life in all its rich colours as the sky is reflected in the deep sea. In the process, the beauty of life loses none of its shades, hues, and colours.

Lenin identified the sources of Tolstoy's greatness. He regarded his works as a "mirror of the Russian revolution" and ascribed the world significance of Tolstoy to the original way in which his work reflected its characteristic features, in particular the sentiments of the peasant masses. Lenin took a very clear-cut view. In his article "Leo Tolstoy

¹ See A. Chicherin, *Ideas and Style*, second edition, Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1968, pp. 228-273 (in Russian).

as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution" he wrote: "Tolstoy is great as the spokesman of the ideas and sentiments that emerged among the millions of Russian peasants at the time the bourgeois revolution was approaching in Russia."¹ And in his article "L. N. Tolstoy" he stressed: "In depicting this period in Russia's history, Tolstoy succeeded in rising to such heights of artistic power that his works rank among the greatest in world literature."²

For Tolstoy, taking the side of the traditional peasantry at the crisis period of the revolutionary movement—in the late 1870s and early '80s—was an act of the greatest selflessness, boldness, and revolutionariness. It enhanced the social message of Tolstoy's realism. The writer looked at the glaring contradictions of life from the viewpoint of the peasantry. That enabled him to make his works the vehicle of the age-old popular wrath and indignation against all forms of exploitation and enslavement. Tolstoy's realism thus acquired a greater critical edge. The great artist mercilessly removed all masks, exposed lies and hypocrisy at the public level, and indicted the elite living by appropriating the fruits of the work of the lower orders. Tolstoy's work, as he progressed, revealed more and more sympathy for the working man whom he proclaimed to be the central figure of life, the proponent and guardian of all the lofty moral concepts, the creator of all material values on earth.

Tolstoy's espousal of the position of traditional peasantry did not remove the contradictions in his views (and they could not have been removed because of the contradictory nature of the social base that the traditional peasantry provided). However, his contradictions were cast in a clearer historical form and were put in a social context, as Lenin revealed. The plots of Tolstoy's works (both on historical themes and about actuality) thus received a kind of focus which accumulated all life's events and itself became a source of light. In *War and Peace* it was the patriotic upsurge of the people which decided the outcome of the war against Napoleon in 1812. And the characters are described according to their relation to the people. Understanding the life of the people was the main goal of Tolstoy's creative aspirations. That accounts for the social

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, p. 206.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p. 323.

relevance of his works in which he turned to the main phenomena of his era. Paraphrasing Pushkin's famous words, one can say that the profound historicity of Tolstoy's thought enabled him to show the destiny of a person as the destiny of the people. And Tolstoy increasingly associated the destiny of the people with the figure of the peasant whom he considered to be central to all life (that is borne out by Tolstoy's *Stories for the People* and his dramas). Tolstoy had come to look at life from the point of view of the muzhik (peasant).

That was the source of the tragedy of Tolstoy, which was by no means just a personal tragedy. Tolstoy tried to solve problems which could not be solved by adopting the position of the traditional peasantry. That is why Lenin, in his article "L. N. Tolstoy and His Epoch",¹ described Tolstoy's socialism as utopian. Tolstoy's ideals of universal humanity could not have been implemented if one proceeded from the positions of the traditional peasantry. While Tolstoy was ahead of his time, he could not be free of the contradictions of life. In search of a way out, he fell into abstract moralising, preaching self-perfection and "non-resistance to evil". Instead of dialectic, there appeared in his works metaphysical speculations, as Romain Rolland noted. Tolstoy became victim of fatalism and revealed a lack of faith in reason.

In such cases the artist's subjective message and the objective truth which he tried to express in his images diverged. That upset realistic forms of typification and in some of their key inner monologues the characters became mere mouthpieces of the author's ideas (the character of Sarantsev in the drama *The Light Shines in the Darkness*). Tolstoy's artistic thought departed from concrete truths and moved into the realm of universal human virtues, and the dialectical perception of the world and fullness of his characters diminished.

Gorky heralded a new period in the history of art which was characterised by new forms of the correlation of the subjective and the objective in the artist's work. He elaborated new principles of typification and a new criterion of artistic truth. The world outlook and world perception of the artist merge with the world outlook and world percep-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 49.

tion of the most revolutionary class, which liberates mankind in liberating itself. Taking the viewpoint of that revolutionary class enabled Gorky to see the social contradictions and reflect them in their wholeness while being clearly aware of the perspective of development. His perception of the world resolves the age-old contradiction between an artist's ideal and reality. Gorky's work also brought art closer to the new reality and liberated it from the burden of unexplained contradictions of life which even Tolstoy at times thought to be mysterious.

The fact that Gorky clearly identified himself with the viewpoint of the most revolutionary social class did not prevent him from giving a full and diverse portrayal of reality. On the contrary, it tended to enhance these qualities. The fact of the matter is that the concreteness, the analysis, and generalisations in Gorky's work are distinct even from those of Tolstoy. Like Tolstoy, Gorky portrayed phenomena from all sides in their interconnection and contradictions. But the dialectical perception of life is, in Gorky's case, socially more definite, pregnant with revolutionary explosions and struggle and, most important, imbued with a new socialist ideal. In Gorky's works, every fact, event, the actions and decisions of the characters, the tragedies and achievements of the "self" are shown not only against a social background but are always clearly related to the fundamental contradictions of his time. Gorky described typical circumstances and the destinies of his characters in terms of the leading social trends. It is not by chance that a whole chapter in *Mother* is devoted to the "kopeck of the marshes". A typical fact provokes contradictions, stormy passions and changes the destinies of man. We see the growing awareness of the workers who have taken the road of collective struggle. A new mould of man—a conscious fighter—is taking shape. Thus a specific fact reflects the general trend to which the future belongs. The picture of the workers' strike is a slice of life which gives an idea of the time. Such portrayal of a concrete fact in the context of the key contradictions of the time and description of socially significant destinies of people is an artistic discovery comparable to discovery of new laws in the natural sciences. With Gorky, any particular fact is illumined by a general idea. He shows a clear way out of the most tragic circumstances, the road to the future, by portraying events in their

development and perspective. In Gorky's imagery, the particular and the general, the public and the universally human are inseparately linked to become an instrument of interpreting the new reality and of expressing the new truth which asserted itself in Russia in the course of the third period of the liberation movement.

Gorky had his own approach to typification of phenomena. Compared with the preceding stage in literature, Gorky quite perceptibly shifted the accent to the ideological sphere of life, to political struggles and conscious attitude of the hero to the basic issues of his time. Gorky depicted the psychology, the social consciousness, the thoughts and feelings of his hero as due social entity reflecting the laws that move society in the epoch of the mass revolutionary movement. Gorky delved deep into all the layers of social life to reveal the epoch of the proletarian movement. Gorky did not always achieve artistic fullness in portraying his heroes and analysing their inner world. But in his best works, which have become classics, Gorky created vivid types which personified their time.

Gorky's works, for all the apparent diversity of pictures, incompleteness of plot and sketchiness of comment, have an "organising" element. The moral element in Gorky's works is more closely linked with the political aspects than with Tolstoy, it is more definite in social terms. As Leonid Leonov said, the revolution had given Gorky wings. All the noblest and brightest principles, including the universal human principle, are in Gorky's works linked with the revolution. He shows that the revolution elevates man, makes him stand upright, and enriches him emotionally and intellectually. This provides a kind of intellectual centre in Gorky's works, which enables him to illuminate all the secret recesses of life, all the motley pictures, including the outrageous contradictions, "the overpowering vileness", with the light of the awakening popular consciousness, the flame of revolutionary struggle, the noble impulses and deeds of the hero, who is a fighter and reformer of the world. It is the shifting of emphasis, in his most important works, to the ideological sphere in human life and man's attitude to the fundamental issues of his time, and the humanistic essence of the revolution that enabled Gorky to create a new artistic system, a new approach to generalisation.

In Gorky's writings, social events and phenomena are

usually shown through the life of the hero, with the two principal elements—the universal and the revolutionary—determining each other. Gorky always describes precisely his character's specific perception of the world and his circumstances. The structure of images in his works invariably strikes one by its historical authenticity. Gorky's characterisations are vivid and graphic. There are no "bit parts" in his plays, for example. Each of his characters is sharply delineated psychologically, and reveals a certain dominant feature and a certain social type. Most of Gorky's characters assume an active attitude towards circumstances. Their psychology is usually revealed in their attitude towards major events which coincide with turning points in their lives. The feelings, thoughts, and acts of the heroes appear as socially determined and themselves reflect social cataclysms. While it sometimes leads Gorky to a publicistic approach, the revolutionary thrust of his works is not weakened by that. Social storms are always at the centre of the writer's attention. He focuses on them, trying to express them in a concentrated way through the shaken consciousness of the character who actively tries to understand his life. Concrete social phenomena are concentrated and refracted through the mind of an individual. In the end, these phenomena are also portrayed vividly and graphically. Thus, a new kind of generalisation through concreteness is achieved. It helps the artist, on the one hand, to give a broad and full picture of reality and to include within his purview the most diverse phenomena and aspects of life, and to use various devices (Gorky's palette of colours and expressiveness of language are amazing!). And on the other hand, he gives an inner coherence to the diverse sketches and graffiti, a completeness to his characters, and a unity of style.

The monistic wholeness of Gorky's world view has enabled him to make broad generalisations, create monumental epic characters without risking to become divorced from life. The broad generalised nature of his characterisations, which blends austere realism and elevated romanticism, does not detract from their truthfulness. To the contrary, it makes them more characteristic and typical. This is a new form of cognition in which subjective ideas are not at variance with objective truth. A coherent dialectical perception of the world helps the artist to concentrate attention on the main

things, to reveal their historical meaning in suitable artistic form.

IV

The artist's position, his world view, and his penetration into the processes of life influence the whole creative process, starting from the selection of facts and the conception of the story and ending with the creation of typical characters in typical circumstances. Even the genre of the work depends greatly on the position and the angle from which the artist chooses to show a particular phenomenon of social life.

Soviet aesthetic writings have given a full enough coverage of the role of world outlook in artistic creation, in selecting facts and revealing historical truth. Numerous facts have been cited to prove that a reactionary world view usually cripples talent and leads the artist to distort reality and espouse false ideals. Art in such cases serves goals which are alien to its true mission. The artist is incapable of creating important works, and loses sight of objective truth, which he replaces with his subjective views, his morbid experiences, and illusions. A revolutionary advanced world view helps the artist to rise to the challenge of his time, gives him foresight and enables him to highlight the important things in life and reveal the perspective of their development. It fosters talent, helps the artist to reveal his ability, encourages his search for new forms, and enables him to create works permeated with the spirit of his time.

The revolutionary class has the biggest vested interest in revealing the truth and asserting it. Artistic truth is the subject of fierce polemic. Every social class and every artistic trend seeks to uphold its own concept of artistic truth and its aesthetic ideal.

However, the world view takes very complex and diverse forms when it is reflected through art. These forms should be studied from a concrete historical angle, taking into account all the various factors which determine an artist's position and the direction of his work. It is, for example, a mistake to reduce the world view of an artist only to his political sympathies and antipathies, as did vulgar sociologists, and to deduce the world outlook from the artist's political declara-

tions, mechanically identifying them with his work.

The artist's world view is a combination of all his ideas about the basic phenomena of life and his understanding of the historical processes. It is most powerfully reflected in the cognition of new phenomena of life and their typification, i.e., in creative work. Actuality, when realistically treated, carries unchallengeable conviction; it has an inner resistance to being distorted, a substance of its own. An artist, provided he is a real artist, and not a poseur or faddist, understands new phenomena of life, reveals them in their coherence, i.e., not as something dead and abstract, fitting a ready "structure" to a fact, but as a *discovery*, i. e., finding a new form to express new content. A key criterion of the truth is the starting point: what guides the artist in his portrayal of facts, whether he follows them, seeks to master them, to reveal their inner meaning and commit them to history or whether he seeks to impose his views, his likes and dislikes on history and to use facts merely to illustrate and bolster his false ideals. History offers a good many examples of artists proceeding from unsound positions, and yet giving a truthful analysis of facts because they followed reality. In their work, realism gained the upper hand over subjective sympathies and antipathies.

The question of why realism prevails in the work of writers who had lost their political bearings is a very complex one. There was a time when this question was treated simplistically, especially in the magazine *Literaturny Kritik*. The so-called Voprekisty ("inspite-ists"), who believed that the truth prevailed in an artist's work in spite of his world view, had a narrow concept of the role of world view in a writer's work. This was noted by Alexander Fadeyev who wrote in his "Notes on Literature" (1955-1956): "Opposing method to world view, which was the take-off point for the aesthetes, in fact, denies the influence of the writer's world view on his work. That position is at odds with the reality of the literary process of the past and of today. Those students of literature who have made an objective and profound study of the work of the great artists of different epochs, the artists whose work was complex and contradictory, invariably came to the same conclusion, i.e., that there is no contradiction between method and world view, that there is a contradiction in the world view itself." Fadeyev cites B.Reizov's book *The Work of Balzac* and points out:

"It gives a faithful picture of Balzac's world view. The author shows that the contradictions of the great writer's world view are due to the fact that Balzac, who shared the political views of the aristocrats, was a child of the French revolution and was influenced by the French Enlighteners. If a person is able to see in reality the things which run counter to his political sympathies, that, too, is an aspect of his world view."¹

B. Reizov writes: "Human and social truth cannot be seen just with the 'physical' eye. The surface of life is not the whole truth and it is not the detailing of life that forms the main strength of Balzac. Truth should be understood and that presupposes an arduous act of cognition. Balzac 'saw the inevitable fall of his beloved aristocrats and described them as men who do not deserve a better lot... He saw the real men of the future where they could only be found at the time' (F. Engels—V. N.). But that was not an act of biological vision, an unconscious or unreasoning grasping of reality. One must understand in order to 'see'...

"One can neither separate Balzac's world view from his 'method' nor oppose them."²

In his "Subjective Notes" Alexander Fadeyev returns to this question and cites Lenin's articles about Tolstoy as a brilliant example of social class analysis of such contradictions which are reflected both in the work and in the theoretical public statements of the writer. "Lenin does not mince words about *glaring contradictions in Lev Tolstoy's world view*."³

In his "Notes on Literature" Alexander Fadeyev also makes the important point that the main condition for the prevalence of realism in a writer's work is following the truth of life: "The simple old maxim that 'life teaches' is very relevant here".

"Balzac saw many things as they are, in spite of his legitimistic views, not only because his mentality was formed under the influence of the French Enlighteners but also because life—the struggle of classes in contemporary society—'taught him that'."⁴

¹ A. Fadeyev, *Over Thirty Years*, second edition, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, Moscow, 1959, pp. 655-656 (in Russian).

² B. Reizov, *The Work of Balzac*, Moscow, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura Publishers, 1939, p. 7 (in Russian).

³ A. Fadeyev, *Over Thirty Years*, p. 900.

⁴ Ibid., p. 657.

And speaking about the Soviet writers, Alexander Fadeyev said that along with deep knowledge of life they had to master the Marxist-Leninist world outlook. That, given other equal conditions (talent, experience, artistic audacity) "is necessary for a writer if he is to correctly understand the complex phenomena of our rapidly developing actuality".¹

And here is what another major artist, the film director Sergei Eisenstein, asserted: "The epoch of victorious socialism is the only epoch in which works of thorough and ultimate perfection are possible ... works which achieve full harmony of all elements, something that was not and could not be previously."²

Socialism offers new conditions for truthful portrayal of reality in art, for bold probing into unknown provinces and insights into the future.

A revolutionary change has taken place in something basic, something that determines the criterion of artistic truth. The socialist revolution in principle removed the barriers between objective and subjective truth in artistic work and put an end to the gap between the ideal and the real. Henceforth it is up to the artist to blend the advance aspirations with the revolutionary change taking place in life and to assess phenomena in that light. New features have appeared in the artistic interpretation of reality and the concepts of the typical, the particular, and the common have changed. The relationship between the particular and the general in every fact, too, has changed.

The revolutionary transformation of our country has changed the relationship between the factual and the historical truth. The fact epitomises the experience of history. That in turn demands that the artist should profoundly understand facts, compare, analyse, and generalise them. The invasion of Soviet art into new areas of life gives rise to the new features in the relationship between the concrete and the universal in the portrayal of characteristic phenomena. Many works of Soviet literature develop from the writer's direct impressions and generalise his personal experience and are often autobiographical. Suffice it to mention *Chapayev* by Dmitry Furmanov, *The Rout* by

¹ Ibid.

² S. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, in six volumes, Vol. 2, Iskusstvo Publishers, Moscow, 1965, pp. 307-308 (in Russian).

Alexander Fadeyev, *Partisan Stories* by Vsevolod Ivanov, *Storm* by Vladimir Bill-Belotserkovsky, *The Fall of Dair* by Alexander Malyshkin, *Red Cavalry* by Isaac Babel, and *Overhaul* by Leonid Sobolev. As the building of socialism in the Soviet Union gathered momentum the link of Soviet literature with new reality grew stronger. In the history of Soviet literature the 1930s saw the appearance of a series of works based on real facts and describing real human destinies. Never was art so close to life and so immediately involved in the spectacular experiment to change it. Reality triumphed in Fyodor Gladkov's *Energy*, and Fyodor Panfyorov's *Bruski*, in Valentin Katayev's novel *Time, Forward!*, Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*, Yuri Krymov's *Tanker Derbent*, and Konstantin Paustovsky's *Kara-Bugaz* and *Colchis*.

The autobiographical genre was revived in a new form. Books appeared whose authors gave eyewitness accounts of events in which they participated, relating their personal experiences which have public significance (*How the Steel Was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky, *The Road to Life* by Anton Makarenko, and *I Love* by Alexander Avdeyenko). But even that approximation of art to life turned out to be less striking than in the period of the Great Patriotic War. History then invaded the sphere of art with its heroic everydayness and it seemed that the distinction between generalisation and fact, between image and reality had disappeared.

The development of Soviet literature gives more and more evidence of the innovatory function of concrete history, authenticity, and generalisation in the depiction of new phenomena of life, which are features of socialist realism. Concrete and authentic portrayal of new facts did not prevent Soviet writers from discerning general phenomena if they took a correct stand, saw the direction of history, and were aware of the place of the authentic fact in the general panorama of historical events.

In narrative form Furmanov's novel *Chapayev* is a kind of diary of a participant in the events described. It retains the proper names and accurately re-creates the places of action and the course of events. Aside from anything else, it is a kind of memoir on which historians could well rely. The historical authenticity of the book is striking. Yet it is equally clear that the book is not a historical study but a

work of art holding up a mirror to the time. Every concrete fact, character and event are depicted not in isolation but in the historical context, and thus acquire special significance and carry an important message. When we follow the scene in which the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Regiment is sent to the front, or Klychkov's meeting with Chapayev, or the course of the battles and the outburst of "guerrilla-like" sentiment among the Chapayev men and of Chapayev himself and then witness their valour, their growing awareness, their discipline and friendship with the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Regiment—we do not only see concrete, precise, and faithful pictures ("the presence effect", authenticity and the author's and reader's empathy for the heroes of the novel are so remarkable as to stand comparison with the best works of this genre in the world), but we are constantly aware of the throbbing pulse of life in general. The time of great events breathes hotly on us and the great idea emerges from behind concrete facts. The storm of the revolution and the flame of the Civil War permeate the texture of the book, the thoughts and feelings of the heroes, the author's lyrical digressions, and the description of battles and life at the front. That lends a special poignancy to the author's style and language. Everything assumes historical significance, every scene, detail, and remark. The image of Chapayev conveys great generalised meaning, describing a historical phenomenon of enormous significance. A talented man of the people was able to reveal, thanks to the October Revolution, all the facets of his no ordinary personality, his generosity, his military gift, hatred of the enemies, and warm affection for his friends. The friendship between Chapayev and Klychkov, the turning of the Chapayev division from a semi-guerrilla army into a regular military unit knit together by discipline and a shared goal, the remarkable evolution of Chapayev revealed with all the originality of detail and political implications—all that assumes truly symbolic significance. And yet the narrative remains scrupulously concrete, never digressing into generalities, everything is strictly factual and authentic.

Critics have broken many lances over the question of a concrete historical approach to events being portrayed and some called for "abolishing" that principle which allegedly constrains the artist's will in his search for new forms of generalisation. So that question merits a closer consideration.

As a matter of fact, the concept of truth does not exist outside history and the specific features of historical development. When the Second Congress of Soviet Writers in 1954 removed the concept of concrete historicity from the definition of socialist realism in the Charter of the Union of Writers as allegedly superfluous, it was not to the good of the theory of socialist realism or the practice of Soviet literature. Subsequent history bore that out. Departure from the concrete historical approach in the work of some Soviet writers led to a mixing of the periods in the life of the people. Turning to recent past, some authors went against historical and psychological truth, making the heroes of the 1930s or the Second World War utter monologues and judge complex phenomena of their time with a degree of historical insight which they did not in fact have and could not have had owing to circumstances out of their control. This made their work less convincing because it failed to re-create the original nature of the time. The reader stopped believing the writer.

Lenin always stressed the importance of the concrete historical approach to the cognition of the truth. In his letter to Inessa Armand in 1916 he wrote: "The whole spirit of Marxism, its whole system, demands that each proposition should be considered (α) only historically, (β) only in connection with others, (γ) only in connection with the concrete experience of history."¹

The concrete historical approach does not constrain the will of the artist, on the contrary, it helps to see in a particular fact the specific features which make it a reflection of universal features. And then fiction (generalisation of what is characteristic, filling in the missing links, and projection into the future) will find an adequate form.

Concrete historicity is the main quality of Marxist thinking. It lies at the basis of the Soviet writer's artistic perception of the world and implies an effort to reveal the meaning of a fact and its significance in the light of concrete historical experience. Given a concrete historical approach, the boldest and most innovatory views of an artist, his aspirations and plans are solidly anchored in reality.

In thus interpreting the principle of concrete historicity we must say, however, that it manifests itself differently in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 250.

different provinces of creative activity. It is particularly apparent in the epic genres.

In the epic genres concrete historicity is the basis. It enables the artist to describe period detail and show the characteristic contradictions, conflicts, clashes, and the situation in which the action takes place. The concrete historical approach enables the artist to find a special harmony between the psychological qualities and the social motives of his heroes. The hero thus becomes a type. His individual world reflects, in microcosm, the unique originality of a social class, a certain milieu, and an ideological phenomenon in all their uniqueness. The logic of the hero's behaviour agrees (in general) with the logic of a historical phenomenon (one thinks of Gorky's *The Life of Klim Samgin* or Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*.) Finally, concrete historicity enables the artist to depict the changes taking place in life not superficially but with characteristic features (the unity of the emotional and the rational). That is especially important when one deals with changes in the mentality of a whole nation, and when art attempts to reflect radical changes in the emotional and intellectual makeup of the Soviet man (what is described as the spiritual world or intellectual sphere of the life of the Soviet people). The latter is notoriously far more difficult than just describing the physical world like the representatives of the French "nouveau roman" (Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute and Michel Butor) or even give a psychological character by arbitrarily engaging in parabolic associations and thus distorting the historical perspective (as do the existentialists, e.g., Camus and Sartre). The heroes of Soviet literature and art (Chapayev, Levinson, Gleb Chumalov, Maxim, Semyon Davydov, Vassili Tyorkin, Ivan Vikhrov, Kirill Izvekov, Marko Bessmertny, or Yegor Trubnikov) give us a vivid idea of the changes in the psychological makeup of the Soviet people, their mentality and their moral and intellectual world.

The concrete historical approach helps the artist to find new forms of generalisation without breaking away from real life. Far from ruling out artistic convention, it lends special force to new forms of convention. The experience of Mayakovsky is remarkable in that respect. A profoundly historical approach enabled Mayakovsky in his poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* to say something new about the epoch

and "the most humane of all humans", Lenin, to re-create revolutionary truth in all its grandeur, and invest his imagery with history.

Mayakovsky's poem *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* is authentic and in many ways documentary. The scholars who studied Mayakovsky's work have proved with great thoroughness that the poem follows a strictly chronological order and in many cases draws on Lenin's utterances and quotes from his works. Mayakovsky includes in the poem his own memories and newspaper reports. The accurate description of the Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the Revolution, on the eve of the uprising, and the picture of Moscow during Lenin's funeral—all these could only have been drawn by an eyewitness. And one could cite other accurate details and historical facts used by Mayakovsky. The poet himself attached exceptional importance to them. He believed that everything should be truthful in a poem about Lenin.

However, the main merit of Mayakovsky's poem should not be reduced to authenticity of detail. This monumental poem is a new kind of epic. In it, Mayakovsky pioneered new methods of typification, new forms of generalisation which permitted him to reveal concrete facts, to compare them against the background of history, and fill them with the atmosphere of the Revolution. He included in his poem reflections about the destinies of the social classes, the Revolution, history, the place of the poet in the proletarian struggles, and invested it with the drama of struggle and with great feeling. The truth of history and the truth as learnt by the people and its poet—Mayakovsky—merge to give a new quality to the epic. Its main concern is to depict the dialectic of history, the course of history, to reveal the greatness of Lenin and his historic role as the leader of a new type and a person of a new type embodying the best features of the revolutionary class.

The concrete historical approach—given the correct overall idea of the course of history—helped the poet to select facts and focus attention on the most important things, to combine concrete detail in reporting events with generalised images. His is a new kind of concreteness and a new kind of generalisation. Mayakovsky's approach to typification can be likened to the methods of sculpture where characteristic features are expressed in a concrete yet generalised form. Some critics have failed to see that and

have accused Mayakovsky of writing posters, not poetry. That is not true. The posterlike quality of his work is a special kind of expressiveness which one finds in visual arts.¹ The poem turns the spotlight on key events and Lenin's character blends with his time. Everything is portrayed in close-up and with dynamism, and at the same time has about it a harmony and completeness which lends artistic coherence to the poem. Mayakovsky introduced a synthetic principle of portraying history and an outstanding personality by showing the dialectical interaction of decisive social factors which manifest new laws of social development.

Historical events are shown not as a background, not as "circumstances" but as a whirling, seething stream in which human destinies are decided. The scope of generalisation is vast—from the inception of capitalism to the early victories of socialism. It was all too easy to become divorced from history and be sidetracked into abstractions. But this did not happen because of the concrete and dialectical wholeness of the poet's thought. Mayakovsky selects the turning points in history to focus on them: the heroism and tragedy of the People's Will revolutionaries, the setting up of the Communist Party, the Revolution of 1905, the First World War, the February Revolution, and the October Revolution of 1917, the New Economic Policy, and the death of Lenin. The powerful figure of Lenin forms an organic part of these key events in history.

Such an approach makes it possible to dramatise the historical causes which led to the appearance of a new type of leader, "the most humane of all humans," and on the other hand, to reveal Lenin's role in history and show the willpower of Lenin and the will of history as inseparably united. The poetic structure of images and the focus on milestones in history conveys the headlong rush of history to its highest point, the Revolution and socialism. Emphasis on Lenin's link with history makes the portrait of him many-sided yet whole and expressive in its historical individuality. Every turning point in history reveals a certain trait of Lenin's character and shows him as a person, thinker, and political leader in a new mould. He "saw what was hidden by time". He could analyse events soberly, weigh all the

¹ Mayakovsky was fond of using the methods of painting in poetry in order to enhance the expressiveness of the word.

pros and cons, and take the only correct decision in the most difficult of situations. As Gorky said, his thoughts, like an arrowhead of a compass, were always directed in defence of the interests of the working people. He was able to foresee the course of events and influence them because he expressed the will of the revolutionary class, the will of history. This approach enables the poet to highlight Lenin's great role in history as a leader of a new type, to make his poem, though lyrical, a vehicle of philosophical reflections and an assertion of the immortality of Lenin's cause.

Lenin in Mayakovsky's poem comes across as a very humane, flesh-and-blood character with traits that are near to all of us, and yet at the same time as a great man who embodied the bidding of history and led the people and the Party in heroic deeds. The poem is drenched in the romanticism of struggle and human courage, blending the poet's feeling with that of the people. Mayakovsky accomplished a revolution in art by effecting a marriage between poetry and history, and making the history of the Revolution poetic and poetry historical.

Soviet poets have followed the trail blazed by Mayakovsky. That was particularly true of the wartime poetry, and not only works about Lenin but also writings about contemporary heroic events—about the defence of Leningrad (Nikolai Tikhonov's *Kirov Is With Us* and Vera Inber's *The Pulkovo Meridian*), the heroic death of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya (*Zoya* by Margarita Aliger), about Alexander Matrosov, to mention but some. They put the concrete events of the Second World War within a broad historical context, glorifying the inexhaustible fortitude, willpower and high consciousness of the Soviet people. The personal and the universal, the subjective and the objective in these works merged into one, marking a new stage in the development of Soviet society and carrying a philosophical message.

Pavel Antokolsky, whose son was killed in the war, found the strength to make his bereavement the subject of a poem entitled *Son* and to interpret it in the light of the overriding conflict of the time—the struggle against nazism—and make some important philosophical observations on the sources of the moral strength and heroic behaviour of young men at war.

Modern poetry, too, shows the influence of Mayakovsky when it addresses itself to important general issues by

depicting concrete things (*Man* by Eduardas Mieželaitis, *A Letter to the 30th Century* by Robert Rozhdestvensky, *Longjumeau* by Andrei Voznesensky, *The Verdict of Memory* by Egor Isayev and other works). Deep historicism helps the poets to write original verse, to discover new themes and look at them from new ideological and aesthetic angles.

With Soviet writers, conscious historicity became an inherent feature of the perception of the world. It determines the balance of the lyrical and epic elements in poetry, prose and drama, and the main forms of typification. The writer is not afraid to openly identify himself with the new and the positive, to poeticise its strength and show its superiority over the old and the moribund. Socialist realism combines the affirmative and critical elements, which reflects the fundamental changes that have taken place in the life of our society since the October Revolution of 1917 when millions became involved in an effort to translate the positive ideal into life. Soviet art devoted its efforts to promoting the positive ideal and the prevailing social trend. That provides the new message of Soviet art, i.e., the poeticisation of the heroism of the masses, and of the new man who is building a new world, the poeticisation of all the beautiful things which we associate with communism. That open allegiance to the Party spirit has deep roots in real life and produces a new artistic consciousness. The works of socialist realism combine knowledge of the laws governing social life derived from a scientific world view, and creative audacity and discoveries (in forms which have been mentioned above) and the development of new aesthetic values. The deeper an artist's knowledge of the laws of life, the freer he feels in choosing a theme, interpreting the experience, discovering new means of typification and displaying his talent. This is borne out by the work of many Soviet writers and artists.

I could subscribe to the impassioned plea made by the Soviet literary scholar A.Ovcharenko in his 1970 reply to an American sovietologist, Ernest Simmons, when he upholds the Soviet artist's loyalty to the Party spirit as the theoretical basis of socialist realism: "...Our allegiance to the Party spirit presupposes and predetermines the greatest objectivity, the greatest courage in facing life and the most sober view of the world. In fact, that allegiance proceeds

from all these things and demands, and I emphasise, *demands* that the world should be depicted in all its bewildering complexity, with contradictions, and struggles and resolution of these contradictions. The loftiness of our view of the world enables us to discern the main lines and perspective of its development, its historic march, and that gives socialism's artists what Gorky described as 'an assured future'. The latter is true even when the artist shows 'the flotsam and jetsam' of life or its past, because in the depths of the artist's imagination both are seen within the broad picture of the changing world."¹

Truthfulness in the high sense of the word, meaning the correspondence of the artist's generalisations to the characteristic phenomena of life, which are shown in their development, is an innovatory achievement of the socialist art. That is most vividly seen in the portrayal of the positive hero. It can safely be asserted that all the major discoveries in the form of typification have been made by socialist art in tackling the problem of the positive hero. A new relationship between the psychological and the social, the individual and the universal elements, a new conception of the heroic, tragic, ideal, and beautiful—all this in the final analysis emerged in the process of re-creating the positive ideal. The positive had a new quality as it was being born and asserted itself in the midst of Soviet reality and was embodied in the hero of our time.

If one takes just one principle in the depiction of the positive hero—his dedication to constructive endeavour—one can trace how it reveals one of the main features of socialist realism, which is a product of our time.

Let it be recalled that in Soviet literature, constructiveness of the hero can manifest itself in various forms of activity in different spheres and conditions, e. g., when the hero's socialist consciousness is just awakening (as in *Virineya* by Seifullina), when the hero already has considerable experience and is faced with a choice whether he should continue along the new road or should defer to the old traditional way of life (Zhdarkin, Maidannikov) and when the hero has attained a high level of consciousness, is

¹ A. Ovcharenko, "More on Socialist Literature and the Theoretical Basis of Socialist Realism", *Inostrannaya Literatura*, 1970, No. 7, p. 217 (in Russian).

concerned about the common weal, aware of drawbacks, and resolutely comes out in favour of innovation, challenging those who impede the advance of the Soviet society (the conflict between Bakhirev and Valgan in Galina Nikolaeva's novel *Battle Along the Way*). The hero's constructive spirit is most apparent when he is called upon to stand up in defence of lofty ideals. The positive hero is always a character out of the ordinary, and his deeds, dreams, and aspirations are beautiful. At the same time he is a real hero, i. e., he is a *human being*. The concrete historical approach, and the striving to show the creative activity of the hero enable the artist to combine fiction with reality and to find individual features of the hero which highlight the characteristic features of the Soviet man, the builder of a new world. Soviet literature thus shows the main feature of our time, and that is the developing consciousness of the people, the blossoming of the individual, and the growing social involvement of the masses.

The Soviet writer seeks to give a complete picture of life and the clash of opposites, and in that he is guided by the positive things which are fighting their way to recognition. That enables the artist to immerse himself in the contradictions of life, to show tragic situations, clashes and confrontations between polar characters without becoming biased. He always has a clear perspective before him. The struggle of opposites and clashes of characters reveal the beauty of the positive ideal, the sterling qualities and nobleness of our heroes, who know exactly in the name of what they are waging their battle. The real and the ideal are inseparably linked. Behind the actuality, and the heroics of struggle, one is constantly aware of the great ideal which came to assert itself in the Soviet Union since the October Revolution. The positive hero is the proponent of the constructive trend of life carrying in him the "energy charge of his epoch". That accounts for the special importance of the positive hero in Soviet literature.

Proceeding from the positive, Soviet writers were able to take a new look at the negative phenomena of life and to reveal their different forms which vary depending on the nature of contradictions, class struggle, and social cleavages. The attitude towards negative social, moral, and psychological phenomena becomes increasingly uncompromising. The writer's stand becomes ever more definite. As socialism

triumphs and goes from strength to strength, the impact of the positive becomes ever greater. Opposition to the negative becomes fiercer and more uncompromising because the emerging new mould of man, the communist man, is active in asserting new forms of social relations. The negative, treated in the light of a positive ideal (even when positive characters are not present in a given work) stands out in bold relief. It may very well be that Soviet writers have been able to show negative types in close-up and have not been afraid to show how tenacious the old world was precisely because they have had a clear historical perspective.

Truthful depiction of the struggle of opposites in its perspective and trends (while proceeding from the positive) went a long way to determine the blend of stark truth and heroic romanticism which is a new distinctive feature of socialist realism. That quality of socialist realism reflects the dialectic of the struggle between the positive and the negative in our life, which provides conditions where the positive can prevail. An optimistic perception of history is characteristic of socialist realist writers (in contrast with the world perception of the writer in the pre-socialist times, which more often than not was marked by a tragic feeling). The sharp struggle between the positive and the negative, revealed in all its stark truth, is, in the major works of socialist realism, imbued with a sense of history.

Fadeyev's evolution offers a characteristic example. Initially denying romanticism (in his article "Down with Schiller") as an antipode of realism, Fadeyev then became convinced through his own creative experience that without romanticism (revolutionary romanticism, that is) realism was too down-to-earth. He came to advocate, especially after he wrote *The Young Guard*, heroic romanticism which he believed was part of socialist realism. Let it be noted that Fadeyev, like Gorky, did not think that romanticism meant merely introducing the heroic element, and did not rule out the realistic basis (such a simplistic interpretation of romanticism was current in the literary criticism of the 1940s). On the contrary. According to Fadeyev, heroic romanticism has its natural roots in truthful and profoundly realistic portrayal of our revolutionary reality. The harsher the circumstances in which the Soviet man upholds lofty ideals, the more heroic his deeds. And the words glorifying these deeds must accordingly be vivid, realistic, and beauti-

ful in a stern way. In such cases the writer identifies himself naturally with the feelings, thoughts, and lofty aspirations of his positive heroes.

Fadeyev's novel *The Young Guard* is outstanding among works about the Great Patriotic War in its innovatory qualities (stark realism of narrative and a poetic view of heroic deeds, the grandeur and spiritual beauty of the man born and reared in the socialist times).

Students of Fadeyev's works have noted his mastery, psychological insight into the dialectic of the human soul, and, most important, the remarkable integrity, purity, and highmindedness of the heroes. The figures of Ulyana Gromova, Oleg Koshevoi, Sergei Tyulenin and Lyuba Shevtsova lend the ideal a reality of the historical fact which struck everyone as being both ordinary and unusual—the fortitude and strength of spirit and willpower manifested on such a mass scale pinpointed a distinctive feature of Soviet society in general.

Scholars rightly attribute the heroic poetry of the real in *The Young Guard* to the special realistic form of generalisation which is inherent in socialist realism when the artist proceeds from a clear historical frame of reference, perceives a fact with all its connections and is able to see the facts as manifestations of the general and the universal. It is a special kind of realism, a realism of heroic deeds of grand scope. And romanticism, too, is of a special kind. It is realistic because it grows out of the writer's awareness of the basic life phenomena.

Fadeyev placed his characters in extreme situations, emphasising their extraordinary qualities. The novel about the young resistance fighters in the city of Krasnodon opens with a scene of Ulyana Gromova admiring a lily. This prompts a simile: the heroine herself is like a lily with all the elusive beautiful hues for which even the rich Russian language does not have enough epithets. Oleg Koshevoi is introduced in an unusual situation. He is first seen stopping bolting horses scared in a bombing raid. As the story unfolds, the extraordinariness of the situation and the behaviour of the Young Guards is brought home to us with cumulative force. The author piles contrast on striking contrast, juxtaposing the usual and the unusual, and investing the situations with suspense. Simultaneously, the realistic elements in the narrative gain strength, as descriptions of events, the situation

and the characters (in most cases the author uses their real-life names) becomes more precise. Artistic approach to characterisation and psychological depth are combined with near-documentary style when the author describes the atrocities perpetrated by the nazi occupiers. In his portrayal of the German Venbong Fadeyev does not resort to grotesque, as did Leonov in showing the enemies in his *Invasion*. Venbong is not frightful, and, in appearance at least, is an ordinary human being. And yet he evokes a feeling of disgust. The writer vividly shows how property corrupts the human soul (the episode with the money-belt in which Venbong kept looted gold was borrowed by Fadeyev from newspaper reports). That narrow-minded philistine is prepared to commit any crime for the sake of that gold, for the sake of gain. The realistic manner in which Venbong is portrayed is perhaps less striking than Leonov's grotesques, but it is powerful in its own way. It enables the author to make Venbong a generalised human type which highlights the noxious basis of nazism (the sense of property).

Towards the end of the novel the narrative becomes more and more documentary, and Fadeyev details the arrests, interrogations and tortures. The novel ends with the actual list of the names of the Young Guard members who died at the hands of the nazis.

The stark truth and the authentic events and descriptions of human suffering is a great asset of the novel. The realism helps to enhance the sense of tragedy and convey the tragic contradiction whereby the youthful heroes, born for happiness, have to sacrifice their lives and do so consciously. But that is just one aspect of the narrative.

The novel derives its special tone from the fact that Fadeyev has combined the usual and the unusual and from the outset has impressed us with the inner beauty and integrity of the Young Guard fighters. As the story moves on towards its tragic end and the death of the heroes, we stand in awe of the fortitude and heroic behaviour of Oleg Koshevoi, Sergei Tyulenin, Lyuba Shevtsova, Ulya Gromova and the other Young Guards. Like a heroic symphony, Fadeyev's novel is dominated by major tones.

We see that the combination of the usual and the unusual in Fadeyev's novel is determined by the dialectic of life. It serves to reveal the basic conflict of the epoch, the heroism of the Young Guards and expose the bestial nature

of nazism. That gives the novel a philosophical dimension and lends it an upbeat mood since it shows, through a tragic situation, the grandeur and moral beauty of the heroic deeds performed by the Soviet people in their struggle against the nazis.

Already the first edition of *The Young Guard* had all the main features and methods of typification that distinguished that novel. The Young Guards were portrayed as the young generation who displayed most vividly the new features and attitudes of the Soviet man formed during the Soviet years.

Fadeyev looks to the sources of the strength of the characters belonging to the new Komsomol generation. The second version of *The Young Guard* expands the narrative to give vivid portraits of Communists—the underground fighters Protsenko, Lyutikov and Barakov—thus to highlight the continuity of generations of Soviet people. Without changing the original structure of the novel, Fadeyev had made important additions which made a considerable difference.

It must be stressed that Fadeyev changed his novel not because he was an “establishment writer”, and had followed instructions from “on high”, as some American sovietologists (including Simmons) would have us believe, but because he saw the drawbacks of his novel himself (Oleg Koshevoi was too strong-willed and rational for his age, and acted like a grown-up. The characters of Valko and Shulga—representing the older resistance fighters—had come out stilted while in fact being unable to wage an effective struggle against the invaders in the complex conditions of the underground). Besides, at the time of writing his novel, Fadeyev was not aware of some facts about the active work of the Bolshevik underground in Krasnodon (which operated under the strictest secrecy). In a novel describing real events, that was an important omission and a departure from historical truth. All that made Fadeyev revise his novel and introduce some essential changes.

First of all, the historical background assumed clearer outlines, and the extraordinary qualities of the new man were put in a broader historical perspective. That made the Young Guards more typical characters. The Young Guards are still, in the second edition, the focus of the narrative, but they stand out more clearly against the broadened

historical background. Linked with the characters of older comrades, the individuality of Oleg Koshevoi, Lyuba Shevtsova, Sergei Tyulenin and Ulya Gromova stands out in bolder relief while at the same time the sources of their heroism are traced to their logical origin. The general conceptual and artistic message of the novel was cast in a more clear-cut form. The cohesion and collectivism, fortitude and heroism of the Young Guards became a symbol of the most important and characteristic feature of Soviet life, i.e., the invincible strength of Soviet society, the moral and political unity of the Soviet people. That was something previously unknown in history. The concrete and symbolic message of the events and characters became clearer in the new version of the novel. It acquired the qualities of an epic describing a historical stage in the life of our country.

Thus, depth of historical insight helps Soviet writers to reveal the new and give due to its justice and beauty. Artistic truth is here synonymous with reflection of characteristic phenomena of life. The artist's subjective perceptions tallied with historical truth. The experience of the people was the writer's own experience, and the advanced philosophy of the age was also his own philosophy. That is why the narrative in *The Young Guard* is imbued with such lyrical emotion. History is not treated as a domain where mysterious forces are at work (the way it was understood by many writers of the pre-socialist times). History is seen as something done by the people who are aware of their place on earth. These traditions of Soviet literature are being carried forward today (of which more will be said in other chapters of this book).

V

This, then, is the main line in the development of the Soviet literature. The main principles of artistic cognition of historical truth have been worked out by Soviet writers collectively and have proved to be fruitful. The history of the Soviet literature, however, has known other approaches to artistic portrayal of reality (romantic, abstract-mythological, symbolic).

Socialist realism has incorporated all the best things that have been found in the course of the search for new forms

of artistic generalisation. But much has been discarded, including by the poets and writers who were the authors of new-fangled ideas. Thus, Selvinsky, Lugovskoi and Zabolotsky gave up their formalistic hyperboles and abstractions which they found to be a hindrance in their search for a unique and poetic expression of concrete phenomena.

One must bear in mind that the search for new forms of expression in the Soviet literature was contradictory. The irrationalist trends in poetry had a harmful effect on the work of Andrei Bely, Boris Pasternak, and Ossip Mandelstam, to mention but a few.

It is not the purport of this book to analyse the anti-realistic forms of writing and the artistic trends they represented. One must say, however, that some complex and controversial poets, while being powerfully influenced by the new Soviet reality, were nevertheless unable to shed their incorrect subjectivist ideas and misconceptions, went to extremes and made mistakes. The authors' confused perception of the world diverted them from the main things, made them sway from one extreme to another, and affected the artistic coherence of their work.

Let us cite Khlebnikov as an example. The Revolution gave Khlebnikov an opportunity to carry out his bold innovative ideas. Even that remote poet, a kind of "itinerant dervish", experienced the great impact of the Revolution and tried to respond to it, to understand and describe the changes that it brought. The students of Khlebnikov's work, such as Tynyanov, Khardjiyev, Pertsov, and Stepanov, draw attention to the change in Khlebnikov's poetry during the October Revolution of 1917. The poet turns to the folklore and basic roots of the Russian language and uses *chastushkas*, *rayeshniks* and inversion that is so common in colloquial speech to make his poetry more expressive. When his subject matter is the Revolution the poet tries to break away from his experiments and formalistic fads and to talk a language that would be better understood by the masses. Instead of complex and vague associations Khlebnikov's poems are filled with references to real life.

In his poem *Ladomir* Khlebnikov glorifies the Revolution and exults over the boundless perspective it opens before the world. The perception of the Revolution in cosmogonic terms is marked by naiveté. Yet the poetic structure of the poem does convey romantic fervour that

was a feature of the work of many poets in the early years of the Revolution, including Mayakovsky ("Ode to the Revolution"). Khlebnikov's other poem, *Night Before the Soviets*, is more realistic than *Ladomir* both in its imagery and in the perception of the world. In it, the poet speaks in a manner reminiscent of Nekrasov about the horrors of serfdom and gives some generalised images of the inhumanity of the old world. By destroying it, the Revolution is administering historical justice. The form of the poem—an old woman telling about the past on the night before the Revolution—provides the poet with a chance to saturate his vocabulary with vernacular words and convey the popular idea of the Revolution as retribution for the crimes of the rich (a recurring motive in Khlebnikov's verse).

The poem *Nastoyascheye* ("The Present") marks a further step towards realism. There are sudden shifts in verse structure, the monologue of the reminiscing Prince is interrupted by the babble of voices coming from a street crowd, and the poet makes recourse to the *chastushka*, filling his verse with the talk of the masses—all in order to dramatise the struggle between the two worlds and give a poetic form to the whirl of popular emotion which was offered an outlet by the Revolution. Khlebnikov's poem *Nastoyascheye* reveals similarities with Blok's *The Twelve*, and not only in ideas, but also in intonation and rhythm, which is due in large measure to the similarities of the two poets' views. Khlebnikov's verse is enriched with bold metaphors, rhymes, and new words coined during the Revolution. The structure of the verse becomes more varied and expressive. Khlebnikov's own coinages (Mayakovsky described Khlebnikov as a "Columbus of new poetic continents") are spliced into his new poetry and find a place in the new system of versification designed to convey the general atmosphere of the Revolution.

But even at the peak of his talent, Khlebnikov could not entirely divest himself of his earlier delusion. The poet sees the Revolution as a spontaneous outburst of pent-up popular feelings. He embraces the Revolution as the revenge of the people for its sufferings, as for instance in the poem *Prachka* ("The Washerwoman"), but he is unable to understand the meaning of the events and see the radical changes taking place in the real world. His illusions are naive, dreamy and cosmic, revealing a romantic, one-sided

perception of the world. Most of his poems are unfinished and fragmentary.

Many of Khlebnikov's weaknesses stem from lack of a coherent perception of the world and of a clear perspective of the development of real life. As contemporaries attest, Khlebnikov was a man not of this world. Chaos in his thoughts and feelings gave rise to chaotic imagery in his poems. N.Stepanov puts his finger on it when he speaks about the alogical images, and a periphrastic, "sideways" approach to the theme and ideas which gradually emerge in vague outline from verbal associations.¹ Khlebnikov associates objects, notions, and phenomena by their secondary features. And then everything stands or falls depending on the poet's angle of vision. If he detects characteristic features, the poetic structure gains a special expressiveness, the poet's subjective notions coincide with reality and result in some powerful associations due to "the poet's fine keen observation and accuracy of physical detail".² But if the associative juxtapositions form themselves into a self-contained string divorced from reality and merely express the poet's vague perceptions or sensations, then the verse becomes formalistic and abstract (sometimes just a sequence of sounds. Hence Khlebnikov's attempt to turn every sound and even letter into a symbol). "Much of this work smacked of the laboratory and represented arcane formalistic exercises."³ Even Khlebnikov's longer poems lack coherence although some of them are coloured by a sustained feeling (*Ladomir*). And that too bears witness to the contradictory and fragmentary nature of the poet's world view. N.Stepanov notes with good reason that "Khlebnikov's epic poems lack unity and wholeness and are not cemented by the genuinely people's conscience which lies at the basis of that epic.

"Khlebnikov's poems are very uneven as if they were made from different materials pasted together. Along with precise, clear and strikingly vivid images one comes across unept, turgid writing and repetitions. That expresses both

¹ See N. Stepanov, "Velimir Khlebnikov". Introductory article for the Third Edition of Khlebnikov's poems in the smaller series of the *Poet's Library* (Biblioteka poeta), Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1960, p. 58 (in Russian).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Khlebnikov's personal features and the contradictions in his world view."¹

Boris Pasternak's work, too, reveals his contradictory perception of the world in a very complex way.

The complex structure of his verse, laden with metaphors and associations, cannot be regarded only as a new stage in poetic thought (as suggested by some critics who prefer surrealist innovations and formalistic experiments in poetry). Firstly, the structure of his verse varies, and secondly, it often reflects his own chaotic thinking, his bemused conscience and bewilderment in the face of life. On occasion, the poet opposed his own erroneous notions to the real state of affairs, and the chaos of contradictory impressions engendered such a convoluted poetic structure as to form a hiatus between the artist and his revolutionary times.

Already Gorky observed that in Pasternak's poetry the link between impression and image is tenuous, almost imperceptible. And addressing himself to Pasternak, he said, "Sometimes I have a sad feeling that the chaos of the world prevails over the power of your creative talent and is reflected in your work as just chaos and disharmony."² Pasternak was probably aware of it himself and tried to break through the chaos of impressions to the essence of life's phenomena. Concern with social issues is felt in his poetic cycle *Life, My Sister* and in the poem *Lieutenant Schmidt*. In these, his poetry became alive to important topics and conveyed the breath of the time and the impact of the Revolution on life. And then instead of chaotic impressions one had the joy of life and struggle, and the poems became more realistically expressive, and the subjective was rooted in the objective. The intricate structure of the verse assumed a different expressiveness even though it remained the same in formal terms. Metaphors were used by the poet to reveal complex phenomena and experiences of his unusual heroes through associations and comparisons (as in *Lieutenant Schmidt*). Objective reality assumed an original form. The poet did not only give free rein to his imagination and indulge in *recherche* metaphors (skipping over several stages in a train of associations), ignoring the

¹ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

² *M. Gorky and Soviet Writers. Literary Heritage*, Vol. 70, Moscow, USSR Academy of Sciences, 1963, p. 308 (in Russian).

link between impressions and the real fact. He used reality as a vehicle for expressing all his poetic finesse, complexity and perceptiveness.

Boris Pasternak could on occasion write verse of classic crispness and lucidity. But it, too, varied. The poetry he wrote during the Second World War was marked by inner strength and clarity and was structurally close to folk poetry. One felt that the poet identified himself with the destiny of his people.¹ Life, in its heroic simplicity and grandeur, forced itself on the poet. But towards the end of his life Boris Pasternak lived through another crisis while he worked on the novel *Doctor Zhivago*.²

¹ I remember that in the first days of the war Boris Pasternak came to the office of Alexander Myasnikov, the head of the Soviet literature department of the Goslitizdat (State Literary Publishing House) and said with much feeling that in wartime no poet could stand aloof of events and that he was going to write a poetic lampoon about the Germans exposing their Nietzschean chimeras about the Arian race and the superman. "I feel with the blood of my heart that such a lampoon is necessary," said Pasternak. The same desire to be involved in an event that affects all moved him when, in the autumn of 1943, he joined a group of writers (including Serafimovich, Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov and Simonov) who went to the Third Army, commanded at the time by Alexander Gorbatov.

² In 1958, I met Boris Pasternak by chance in hospital No. 1 of the RSFSR Ministry of Health (at Volynskoye). He had already written *Doctor Zhivago*. Contrary to slanderous allegations in the West of the effect that the sick poet was being hounded in the USSR, Boris Pasternak was treated with care and placed at one of the best hospitals in Moscow. He was in a very poor state of health, his cancer was getting worse. The hospital atmosphere weighed heavily on him. I saw a sick poet, lonely and brooding. He did not talk to anyone, and read adventure novels. There was little in the stooped figure of a gloomy man in his hospital gown to remind one of the proud and resolute poet whom I saw in the office of Soviet literature editor of Goslitizdat, A. Myasnikov, in 1941. The light had gone from his eyes and his face was sallow. He complained that the doctors were no good and didn't know how to treat him. His nerves were jaded but he tried to conceal that. I myself had lived through two serious operations and could barely walk. But hospital brings people closer together. Once, when we found ourselves alone in the corridor, I told Boris Leonidovich about our meeting back in 1941 and quoted by heart his poems: "The trembling piano will lick the foam from the lips", and "O, lying Angel, why not at once..." He became very emotional and muttered, "Well, I never... Who would have thought..." And something else in the same vein. Tears appeared in his eyes and his voice broke. He squeezed my hand quickly and went back to his room.

As before, the poet immersed himself in a world of arcane subjectivist experience. With his abstract and individualistic consciousness he failed to give a historically correct answer to many questions, including the questions which then engaged his mind: the intelligentsia in a revolution, the poet's duty and artistic freedom. Individualistic misconceptions and delusions prevailed in his work. His novel *Doctor Zhivago* is a model of blatant tendentiousness. In that novel, morbid imagination triumphs over historical truth. The author has misunderstood and distorted the humanistic essence of the October Revolution and the great social changes which took place in our country in the period of socialist construction. The novel solves the key problem of history—the intelligentsia and revolution—from the position of individualism: revolution is a juggernaut which crushes all things living, and oppresses and prevents talent, purity, and light from manifesting themselves. The novel is flat and monotonous both in its methods of portrayal and in language. Artistic perception gives way to preconceived and misguided judgements which are remote from historical truth. Thus the poet's delusions crippled his talent.

Another artist influenced by the Revolution was Mikhail Bulgakov. His world view was also marked by contradictions which told on his work and determined his complex evolution.

In his best works (*The Days of the Turbins* and *Retreat*) the objective perception of the world prevails. In *Retreat* ("Beg") the death of Khludov and all he and his like stood for was portrayed in all its drama and complexity as an inevitable result of historical development. However, Bulgakov contradicted himself in tackling the problem of the freedom of the individual and historical necessity. His sympathies were with people sincerely wishing to live outside the struggles, social clashes, and upheavals, with Chekhovian intellectuals who are drawn into the maelstrom of life against their will and are thrown from one tragic situation to another. At the same time Bulgakov hated those who in their self-seeking interests forgot about beauty, love, and decency, sold conscience for a mess of pottage, and were ready to live like reptiles.

Bulgakov's own perception of the world was close to that of his positive heroes and he largely shared their perception

of his time which was full of tragic contradictions and struggles. He saw that Khludov and his ilk were doomed to death not only because they expressed the darkness of the old world but also because they had severed their links with all the best features of the old world (the concepts of nobleman's honour, gentlemanly behaviour, and conscience). The *White Guard* had stopped being a *guard*. Bulgakov's grasp of the social roots of complex clashes was insufficiently deep, hence his artistic impact could not be as powerful here. The moral criterion, so important in assessing the virtues of a particular character, is not in his plays inspired by revolutionary struggle, and is not marked by the same keen social sense as in the dramas of Maxim Gorky, Konstantin Trenev, Vsevolod Ivanov, Boris Lavrenev, and other Soviet writers. For all the broad panorama of events (as in *Retreat*) and the skill in re-creating sharp clashes, drawing vivid characters, and depicting the feelings, the social aspect is somewhat narrowed and weakened in his plays. Bulgakov was unable to fuse the ideological thrust of his epoch with depiction of historical development and poeticisation of new moral values and human qualities moulded by the Revolution.

Vagueness of world outlook, especially in assessing the importance of the new, proved to be a weakness of that versatile and talented artist. That led to internal contradictions: the chaos of superficial impressions obscured his grasp of radical and profound change. All of this was reflected in his work, giving rise to writings which often used grotesque and fantasy to convey not only the inner turmoil of the writer but also his incorrect views of Soviet reality (*Fateful Eggs, A Dog's Heart*). "The talented writer failed to understand or come to terms with some basic trends of his time and had a one-sided judgement of it," wrote A. Metchenko.

Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, which has a very complex structure, also reveals the contradictions of his views. In artistic terms, the novel proceeds on many levels of narrative—satire, fantasy, history, and lyricism. Every level of narrative has its distant features. Carried away by his theme, the author freely intermingles the most incredible events, exulting in the opportunity to display his prowess in various genres.

Particular perceptiveness and authenticity marks the

descriptions of characters and situations in the historical narrative where Bulgakov re-creates an ancient period in history, narrating the story of Jeshua, and describing the behavior of Pontius Pilate. The expressiveness of the word is striking, reminding one of Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Biblical events are described in a realistic manner which removes the legendary aura from them. Jeshua and Pontius Pilate are flesh-and-blood people with their own individual features and behaviour. Bulgakov achieves artistic authenticity in describing characters and circumstances. They are typical psychologically and historically.

The satirical layer in Bulgakov's novel is equally expressive and original, and draws on real life. The world of philistines, pilferers, narrow-minded people smug in their virtue and decency—all this is depicted graphically, with humour and sarcasm. Grotesque and the interweaving of reality and fantasy are quite justified. The satirical pages in the novel evoke the atmosphere and period detail of the 1920s.

All the narrative in the novel is marked by a warm lyrical feeling, especially when the writer speaks about the Master and the prophet Jeshua. The author identifies himself with these characters. It is not by chance that he evokes so feelingly the creative pangs of the Master and the strength of Jeshua's virtue. It will be recalled that Jeshua is treated both as a living hero and an image created by the Master. Thus the novel brings together different planes of narrative and draws an analogy between the life of the virtuous Jeshua and the life of the master artist who believes that the highest mission of art is to uphold good and truth on earth.

The demonic element embodied in the character of Woland is treated as a manifestation of the forces outside reality which still prevail in life and can do good and evil, turn the real into the fantastic (and vice versa), the ordinary into the extraordinary (and vice versa), and play with human lives.

The original and in many ways parabolic form of Bulgakov's novel, which interweaves various narrative planes, projects into the world of fantasy, the world of imagination, and the real life—all this is designed to express the complex and in many ways contradictory perceptions of the author. Bulgakov's novel is a philosophical work about the tragedy of an artist, imbued with great lyrical feeling. We are attract-

ed by the novel's ideas about the lofty mission of art which is called upon to promote good and oppose evil. The character of the Master, a man pure of soul and aspirations, an inspired artist and admirer of beauty, who needs communication and a kindred soul—such a character appeals to us. We are in sympathy with all the humanistic ideas of the novel and feel deeply the tragedy of the artist. But we see that the overall conception of the novel is not historical enough.

Without going into detail, let it be said that Bulgakov was short of optimism in his perception of history. He exaggerated the sway of the irrational dark forces of life. His position is similar to that of Gogol who wrote *The Nose* or Hoffmann with his *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr*. Bulgakov's perception of the world is in many ways similar to the perception of those writers. And that brings us to the merits as well as demerits of the total concept of Bulgakov's novel. The merits of the novel lie in its general humanistic message. Its shortcomings stem from an exaggerated idea of the prevalence of tragic phenomena in life and morbid reaction to the fatalistic power of the negative. At that point Bulgakov's perception of the world diverged from that of other Soviet writers, such as Gorky, Serafimovich, Mayakovsky, Fadeyev, and Sholokhov. His approach to the question of good and evil and the mission of art erred on the side of being abstract. There is not enough awareness of history and the basic changes going on in life. All this must be borne in mind in assessing his work.

Konstantin Simonov rightly said that Bulgakov occupied a special position in Soviet literature. Unlike the leading Soviet writers, Bulgakov could not quite come to terms with his epoch. And when he said that, Konstantin Simonov stressed that by "epoch" he means "the epoch, with all its complexities, of the building of socialism". The general perception of the world resulting from the writer's stand was reflected in the novel *The Master and Margarita* and in the long run determined its original form. The concept of the novel, while undoubtedly humanistic, turned out—when one compares it against our time—historically incomplete and subjectively limited.

The work of Khlebnikov, Pasternak, and Bulgakov highlights the dependence of artistic truth on the world view and world perception of the author. Whenever the

artist's perception of the world drew nearer to the great historic truth he created a work reflecting the characteristic life processes. When his perception of the world diverged from the prevailing trend of development, the author withdrew into a world of subjective delusions, and weaknesses showed in his work. His work, then, bore witness to the painful reflections and experiences of the author who had not enough strength to understand the course of historical progress.

VI

Completeness is an indispensable condition of artistic truth.

By completeness I mean something more than a many-sided description of events or human acts. An artistic work is not a historical treatise. One cannot expect it to be everything that one requires from a historical study (thoroughness, consistency, absolute accuracy). Imagination is enormously important in the artist's work. But imagination is not the same as arbitrariness. Gorky believed that imagination must be used to bring things to conclusion, to restore missing links, and divine the future. Herein lies the difference between a historian's and an artist's approach to phenomena which was noted by Aristotle. He said that a historian restores an event *as it was* while an artist re-creates it *as it might have been*. That does not dispense the artist from the duty to know facts. But the artist needs a broader approach. It is his duty to understand a fact and its hidden links and causes, and to always be aware and divine the link between the individual, the particular, and the general. Thus, the demands on the artist as far as insight into historical truth is concerned are higher. He is able to give a whole idea of the phenomenon in its movement and development. And that reveals the artist's advantage over the historian. He is not obliged to consider the whole range of facts pertaining to a given event or phenomenon. He can afford to concentrate on a single fact, a single event, a single life. The selection of material and search of ways to depict it offers an unlimited field for the artist to display his capabilities. But it is invariably his task—whatever fact he chooses—to reveal the general, typical, and characteristic

through the individual, to give an idea, through artistic imagery, about the totality of causes which brought about a certain fact, to reveal its significance in the general course of events, to detect and record the perspective of its development.

Romantic forms of portrayal have their own specific features and need not concern us here. But when we speak about realism and refer to such a universal genre of literature as, say, the novel, it is fair to say that one-sidedness and divorcement from history damage it. Any one-sidedness in a novel, and emphasis of one fact isolated from the complex causes which have generated it leads to incompleteness, a shift of accents and colours, hence to artistic untruth.

Completeness means completeness of images, and of the idea and aesthetic content of the work. It is a measure of mastery and expressiveness.

Belinsky is to be credited with introducing and explaining the notion of completeness in that meaning (correspondence of the system of images to the conception of the work, inner harmony of images, integrity of composition and style).

Mastery, however, is not a self-contained phenomenon. Form and content in a work interact like nitrogen and hydrogen in nature, each time to form a new compound with a perfect link of molecules and their structure.

Completeness of images and their depiction depends on many factors, such as choice of object, the author's viewpoint, his knowledge of life, his ability to focus attention on the main things, and his talent. There is, however, a basic consideration which determines the completeness of an image and the author's conception not as an immanent structure but as a special world which should give a complete and whole idea of reality. And there again we see the interconnection between completeness and the notion of the typical and characteristic, the logic behind the selection of material, cognition of the main thing, and its portrayal in a historical perspective. The completeness of realistic generalisation is determined by how far an image reflects the characteristic and gives an idea of the movement of time. In socialist realism, a qualitatively new world view (a dialectical wholeness in the perception of the world and a clear sense of perspective) lends a new fullness to the portrayal of life's characteristic phenomena. A conscious

historical viewpoint enables the artist to see what escapes a non-Marxist artist, to see the complex interconnection of phenomena and single out the main things.

Gorky in his article "O Kochke i Tochke" ("A View from a Summit and a View from a Hummock") noted: "The broader the writer's social experience the higher his point of view, the wider his intellectual horizon, the better he sees what is connected with what on this earth and how these approximations and conjunctions interact. Scientific socialism has given us the highest intellectual plateau from which one can clearly see the past and the straight and only road to the future..."¹

"The highest intellectual plateau" has been provided for Soviet artists by the October Revolution. It enables the artist to depict our unprecedentedly dramatic time in all its complexity and to see how individual facts and confused human lives fit into the power lines which determine the course of history and its development.

Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* appeared almost simultaneously with such literary works as Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. They have much in common, including the attempt to show the destiny of the generation which experienced the First World War. One can see some common features in the depiction of the horrors of war, the attempt of the authors to convey the feelings of the heroes at war, on the battlefield, and describe death in stark detail, etc. However, the different stands of the artists (the degree of their historicity) resulted in a different assessment of the First World War and, moreover, determined the differences of the intellectual and artistic structure and the merits of these works.

Sholokhov proceeds from a totally different frame of reference in assessing events and the lives of his characters than Hemingway and Remarque. That determines the plot of *Quiet Flows the Don*, the angle from which the characters are depicted, the underlying philosophy, the ideas, and aesthetic concepts. All the complex picture of life, the behaviour of people and their destinies, the dramatic social upheavals and intimate feelings of the heroes in *Quiet Flows the Don* are, directly or indirectly, illumined by the light

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, in thirty volumes, Vol. 27, p. 49.

of the greatest event of human history, the light of the October Socialist Revolution. That lends an epic quality and a special breath to *Quiet Flows the Don*. The self-contained world of the Cossacks, including that of Grigory Melekhov, is intruded upon by historical events and they are drawn into the whirlpool of life and struggles which change their mentality and feelings. The October Revolution breaks into their homes and rocks the foundations of their life. They are involved in major events. History puts them before a dilemma. Events pass through the hearts and souls of the heroes. And the private world and feelings of the heroes are also illuminated by the light of the Revolution. The particular and the general, the everyday and the universally human, the private and the universal merge and interweave, and are drawn in the maelstrom of sweeping events. The ordinary becomes extraordinary, and the individual destinies of common people reflect processes which mark an epoch of great change which has global implications.

Sholokhov in *Quiet Flows the Don* gives a new answer to the question of personal happiness. All his characters are drawn against a sweeping backdrop of the revolutionary events, and Sholokhov shows how the individual destinies interweave with history. The question of personal happiness is linked with the responsibility of the individual before history and his people. That lends exceptional significance to the tragedy of Grigory Melekhov revealed in all the complexity of conflicting personal and social interests of topical and universal importance.

Our critics have broken many lances over the question whether Grigory Melekhov is typical or not and about the social implications of his tragedy. Some critics departed from the concrete historical principle in the analysis of complex phenomena and indulged in abstractions. And then the social aspect of Grigory Melekhov's story was lost. And yet Sholokhov's novel reveals both the social and universally human aspects through Grigory Melekhov, linking them with the main contradictions of the time. Sholokhov's humanism is inseparable from a concrete perception of history and the logic of class struggle at its great turning point.

The author is utterly truthful in depicting sharp class struggles and the influence of social contradictions (Cossack privileges) on the destiny of Grigory Melekhov. In order to

trace Grigory Melekhov's tragedy to its social sources, Sholokhov expanded the initial conception of the novel to tell more about background events, and wrote a new part of the novel (Part I) about the life of the Cossack villages, revealing the conditions which had shaped Grigory Melekhov's character. Thus the continuity of time became more pronounced in the novel, which showed with greater impact how social conflicts came to a head during the Revolution. It becomes clear why Grigory Melekhov made fateful mistakes at a turning point in history and was unable to grasp the meaning of events and identify himself totally with the Revolution.

Sholokhov's historicity is particularly powerful in depicting the evolution of Grigory Melekhov's soul. It is a measure of the writer's mastery that he does not merely show the contradictions tormenting his hero against the backdrop of history but uses them for a synthetic and artistic insight into the hidden processes which take place in the life of men at sharp turns in history. The writer achieves historical, psychological, and social fullness in depicting the inner world of his hero, his impulses and desperate vascillations. Although a contradictory character, Grigory Melekhov has a dominant feature which lends historical and social completeness to his evolution. The logic of Grigory Melekhov's evolution is dialectically interconnected with the logic of history and social struggles during the Revolution.

It is clear from Sholokhov's novel that the Revolution has exerted a powerful influence on Grigory Melekhov. His destiny is a complex reflection of the eternal (the victorious might of the Revolution) and the transient (social prejudice). The entrenched prejudice and the haunting past determine Grigory's fateful mistakes and delusions, and his behaviour (his changes of heart and his defections from one camp to another). But the external and internal are also at variance in the behaviour, feelings, and thoughts of Grigory Melekhov; they are in glaring contradiction. The main merit and the wider implications of the character of Grigory Melekhov stem from the fact that his mistakes and shifts of allegiance reflect not only the decay of a personality but painful maturing of a new conscience and gradual understanding of his error which landed him on the wrong side. In that respect there is something in common between the way Sholokhov shows the tragedy of Grigory Melekhov and

Gorky, the tragedy of Egor Bulychev. They do not only pass merciless judgement on the heroes for their mistakes but also show, through their tragedy, the humanistic message of the Revolution, which opens for the characters the solely possible and clear road to a new life.

Sholokhov's attitude to Grigory Melekhov is humane. At the same time he is a realist with a clear grasp of the logic of history. He raises the question of personal responsibility for one's acts at a time of acute struggle when the destiny of nation is being decided. And there his stand is unequivocal (just as Gorky's stand in *Egor Bulychev*). Sholokhov shows in his novel that during the Revolution Grigory Melekhov's path sharply diverges from that of his people. And the writer condemns Grigory Melekhov for that. He uses artistic means to bring home his message. He creates drama-laden situations with amazing psychological acuity (the death of Aksinya, the attempted suicide of Natalia, the death of Grigory's mother Ilyinichna, the hero's meeting with his son in the end of the novel when the latter fails to recognise his father in a bedraggled unarmed bandit). Sholokhov shows the high price Grigory Melekhov had to pay for his mistakes. Grigory's inner upheavals are invested with great meaning. Sholokhov takes his hero through suffering and makes him painfully assess his acts in the light of his attitude towards the main historical event—the October Revolution—and admit his irrevocable mistakes. "Of course I should have been in the Red Army to the end and then things might have turned out well for me," says Melekhov. When he falls in with the band of Fomin, Grigory Melekhov challenges not only history but his own people and himself, and thus forfeits his right to be a human being. Sholokhov uses the tragedy of Grigory Melekhov to bring home with startling impact the main message of his work, which is that there is no middle road when a pitched class battle is under way. To be with one's people and with the Revolution is the only road to happiness.

We see that Sholokhov does not shy away from depicting the tragic sides of life but with him they are illumined by the light of history and lead to conclusions of universal significance. Social, psychological, historical, and universally human aspects in the depiction of events and characters are blended in the novel to confer an epic quality on it. The concrete facts shown in a broad context and placed in the

general frame of historical events acquire artistic expressiveness. Through the complex life and experiences of his hero Sholokhov reveals the leading trend of the time, the triumphant strength of the Revolution.

Sholokhov's humanism is active and militant. It is imbued with faith in man, in collective effort aimed at transforming life. This is what makes *Quiet Flows the Don* an innovatory work which conveys the optimistic character of the epoch.

The novels of Hemingway and Remarque were also progressive phenomena in literature and social life. They truthfully portrayed the behaviour of man at war, gave realistic pictures of everyday life at war, the meaningless cruelty, and tragic disunity and lack of communication among people. But apart from that, they carried an important message because they showed the disenchantment of a whole generation of men with bourgeois civilisation and bourgeois democracy. The gore, the filth, the inferno, and injustice with which they are faced during the war shake them and make them see life in a different light.

Hemingway and Remarque were both writers of broadly democratic views, and it was harder for them to get at the truth and inner meaning of the tragic contradictions. And yet proceeding from real facts and pondering what they themselves had experienced and seen during and after the war along with their heroes, they have said many true things in their novels, reflecting the sentiments of a whole generation and arguing potently that the ideals of bourgeois civilisation have spent themselves.

However, pessimism reflected the historical limitations of the realism of Hemingway and Remarque. Pessimism led them into a blind alley and that influenced the structure of their novels, and the descriptions of the heroes. The characters are keenly aware of the filth and rottenness of antagonistic society. They understand that one cannot go on living like that and are ready to let everything go hang but ... they have no idea of what is to be done. They try to find solace in friendship, comradeship, in love, i. e., in the moral aspects of the individual. And that, in turn, gives rise to contradictions, the merits and demerits of the novels.

Belief in the individual virtues as a cure-all increases the critical thrust of the novel of Hemingway and Remarque when it comes to everyday circumstances, but at the same

time it foreshortens the social and historical perspective when it comes to social development, class battles, etc. Pessimism colours the whole narrative. The emotional world of the characters (and the writers themselves) is confined to just one side of life, the tragedy of an individual and the sentiments of the "lost generation". The object of description (the sentiments of heroes disenchanted with everything except love and friendship) prevented broader social analysis and deeper probing into the social causes of war and human behaviour. The austere humanism of Hemingway and Remarque was confined to sympathy for a suffering individual and was devoid of an optimistic uplift.

If one compares the novels of Hemingway and Remarque with the novels of Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu* and *Clarté*, one can see the fundamental difference in the artist's stand both in reflecting the movement of history and in the principles of typification. *Le Feu* by Henri Barbusse is as starkly realistic as Hemingway's and Remarque's novels. Barbusse truthfully depicts man's suffering at war and through that suffering condemns war. But he goes further than that. He pinpoints the most characteristic new phenomenon which was to develop and take root and prevail over the sway of anti-humane passions and battles—and that is the awakening conscience of a soldier. As Lenin pointed out: "The transformation of an absolutely ignorant rank-and-filer, utterly crushed by philistine ideas and prejudices, into a revolutionary under the influence of the war is depicted with extraordinary power, talent and truthfulness."¹ That provides the writer with a reference point in assessing events and prospects. The novel of Henri Barbusse reveals the social causes of war and human behaviour. And the events are portrayed with precision. Filled with sombre colours in the descriptions of tragic sides of life, Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* proved more optimistic in its perception of the march of history. His humanism is active and imbued with the sense of the need to fight for justice.

It is not by chance that Gorky described *Le Feu* as a book permeated with "the stern poetry of truth" and "filled with prophetic wrath". Gorky felt that in the dark-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 509.

ness portrayed by Barbusse there “flicker the flames of a new consciousness: and these flames, we believe, will soon become a world-wide flame to cleanse the earth of filth, gore, lies, and hypocrisy created by the Devil of Capital”.

It will be seen, then, that the depth of the artist's historical thought and his ability to “objectivise” concrete facts, including his personal impressions, and to depict them in such a way that the reader should be aware of an overall optimistic perception of history, influences both the choice of the object and the method of depiction which in the long run determines the degree of historical truth and artistic completeness with which characteristic phenomena are portrayed in a work of art.

* * *

The strength of the method of socialist realism, which has produced its own artistic system, lies in the fact that it sprang up as an *artistic analogue* of revolutionary reality which can convey the advance of history in all its complexity. What had been an ambition of realistic art throughout its history—combining conscious depth with artistic effectiveness of images and human types which reflect the destiny of the people through the destiny of an individual—became possible under socialism thanks to the new historical conditions which fostered a new artistic consciousness and a new type of artistic work. Socialist art has yet to reveal *all* the potential of the new relationship between artistic consciousness and revolutionary reality. It has already made great gains, mainly along the road of truthful depiction of the heroic deeds of the Soviet people and their sterling moral qualities. Soviet writers have everything necessary to ensure that historical and artistic truth are in harmony and find a inique form of expression in their work. But it bears repeating that this does not come automatically. New times present new demands. The artist of socialist realism should not merely have a progressive outlook. He must combine the qualities of a *historian* who has a profound knowledge of reality and the laws of social development, a *philosopher* who takes a broad view of events and the deeds of the people, and a *poet* (in the lofty sense of that word) who can find new images to express the truth of his age. Conscious historicity makes for truthfulness

of socialist realistic art when the artist actively probes into the new processes taking place in life. A writer's work consists in *discovering* the truth; and then he can rise to the task which history has set before him: to "tell hundreds of millions of people the truth about the socialist society, the Soviet way of life and the building of communism in our country... The truth about the Soviet Union must be heard in all the continents".¹

¹ L. I. Brezhnev, Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, *24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Documents*, Novosty Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1971, p. 109.

NEW HISTORICITY AND NEW TRUTH

I

Dobrolyubov in his time wrote that the art of the future would combine profound scientific knowledge of reality with artistic generalisation and vivid portraiture. And this is the gist of what Engels wrote—in more profound and definite terms—to Lassalle when he defined the main features of future drama.

It is not by chance that in describing the art of the future, Engels gave pride of place to the criterion of historical consciousness. Elaborating Engels' thoughts, Lenin ("Party Organisation and Party Literature") pointed out that future free literature should enrich the latest word in the revolutionary thought of mankind with the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat establishing constant interaction between the experience of the past and the present. Lenin stressed that literature could effect this interaction on the basis of scientific socialism, which has evolved from utopian forms into a science to become a force which could make it possible to direct social progress.

As we have pointed out socialism creates a new pattern of interaction between art and reality. For the first time in history art is freed from bondage to the interests of a class which exploits human abilities for its selfish parasitic ends. Artistic creation combines and merges with advanced revolutionary consciousness and with the interests of those who make history and who form the cream and future of the people. The very concept of the primacy of reality over artistic world changes. Art becomes free both in terms of ideas, in raising new questions and in the modes of artistic portrayal of reality. That makes an imprint on all kinds of artistic work.

Artistic work under socialism is marked by the growing

role of the subjective element, talent, and world view of the writer but also by the growing importance of the objective aspect, i. e., reflection of the gigantic changes taking place in life. The more politically-minded the artist is and the broader his view of reality, the more actively he probes into new areas of life and the more audacious he is in raising unresolved questions, the greater his chances of discovering the truth independently and of being objective and truthful in his work. That is a new feature characteristic of all Soviet literature, which espouses socialist realism.

Understanding new phenomena and processes of life, and the search for adequate forms of expression in Soviet art proceeds from an awareness of history and the artist's clear awareness of the laws of social development. History no longer scares the artist with its mystery, its tragedy, its puzzling facts, events, and human destinies. The will of the Bolsheviks, as Alexei Tolstoy has said, has bridled the fiery steed of history and steered it along the right road. "The chaos and arbitrariness that had previously reigned in views on history and politics were replaced by a strikingly integral and harmonious scientific theory..."¹ wrote Lenin in his article "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism" assessing the importance of the theory of Marx for a new understanding of the historical process. In this respect Marxism has influenced artistic thought and determined its features.

Alexei Tolstoy, whose evolution as an artist was complex, confessed: "Only now am I discovering genuine freedom of creativity, the range of themes that cannot be spanned by one life—now that I am mastering a Marxist understanding of history and the great teaching which has passed through the experience of the October Revolution gives me purpose and method in reading the book of life. History reveals its sinews of laws and man becomes master, manager, and creator of the history of the present and the future."² "History came to reveal its untapped riches,"³ he wrote in his article "Marxism Has Enriched Art".

The historical approach of Soviet art stems from objective factors. They have to do with the historical significance

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 25.

² A. N. Tolstoy, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 323 (in Russian).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

of socialism as a new social system, the heightened consciousness of the people, makers of history, and the new mode of artistic thought which has taken shape under the influence of Marxism.

What has been the impact on artistic creation of conscious historical approach? What new processes has it engendered in art? These are exceedingly complex questions and I do not purport to answer them exhaustively. But let us dwell on some key points.

By conscious historical approach we mean features of thought which are equally characteristic of the approach to the past and the present. It is the degree of the artist's penetration into the course of history when he knows its laws, is able to understand and reveal the historical meaning of phenomena and their links with the past, present, and the future. Historicity takes different forms in different kinds of art. In the genre of historical novels it is determined by the "distance of time" (in terms of theme and knowledge of the past) and has its own criteria as regards attitude to the past, authenticity in describing events and characters (historical figures), the use of documents, the limits of fiction, and the nature of fiction, re-creation of the colour of the time, period language, customs, etc. Historicity has a special meaning in understanding and depicting the present time. It prompts the artist not only to a special approach to the phenomenon (to distinguish the important from the secondary, the eternal from the transient in the light of historical trends and foreseeing the course of history), and the means of typification (to reveal characteristic features in all their diversity and reality which refracts and interweaves the past, the present, and the future). The artist divines history and that brings forth its own concepts and leads to discoveries, the creation of new characters and types which ring true to history. In that case historical precision in describing events and circumstances (concrete portrayal of history) and artistic concepts of the work combine in a dialectical way. New ideological and aesthetic values are created which give an idea of the progress of history. They mark discoveries and innovations of art.

Let us dwell on the growing degree of concrete generalisation in Soviet art and the elaboration of monumental forms of generalisation. That phenomenon is characteristic of socialist realism and stems from the magnitude and

historical significance of the transformations which are taking place in our life. Seen and understood in historical perspective, every triumph of new social relations in our country assumes enormous significance. The absolute value of the new in Soviet reality increases. The very concept of circumstances changes (they become human) and so does the concept of conflicts which dramatise the moral grandeur of the Soviet man and the vigour of the new. There is a change, too, in the notion of the particular, the characteristic, and the massive with regard to the hero. The typical hero of the people becomes the focus which concentrates and refracts the great changes taking place in life. For example, the more a positive hero embodies the qualities of the people transforming the world and itself, the more typical the hero is, for all his individuality. The human element triumphs everywhere, changes the correlation between the social and the psychological in the hero's psyche and between the national and universally human. That leads the artist to regard the concrete facts from the summit of achievements and to look for the centre in which the rays of the new (or the dying past) are focused. Fact in such cases is fleshed out with history.

Portraying characteristic facts in historical perspective and in the light of the main conflicts and confronting forces enhances concrete generalisation in Soviet art and produces new forms of generalisation. The more important works draw events and characters in bold and powerful strokes. Focus on basic, historically significant things makes for a profound and all-round depiction of the characteristic, permits to distribute the shades and hues clearly, to reveal the struggle of confronting forces in strict accordance with historical truth.

Concreteness is combined with profound analysis of new conflicts and new contradictions, and the depiction of the dialectic of the character's feelings and thoughts. Soviet writers do not shy away from stern truth and depict difficulties and tragic situations. However their approach is not one-sided. They seek to show the many facets and inter-connections of the phenomena portrayed. Along with analysis of circumstances there is a synthetic picture of the forward march of history, the description of the heroes who overcome obstacles. That changes the very notion of the tragic (by giving prominence to the heroic element), and

also the nature of criticism itself (the artist is increasingly aware of the ideal, and criticism and satire become markedly constructive). The assertion of life on which centres the portrayal of new artistic truth renews the very notion of realism. Realism assumes an essentially heroic character.

Concrete generalisation in the portrayal of the essential and characteristic in the works of socialist realism does not preclude the use of a variety of artistic means. Given a clear-cut stand of the artist, and a coherent composition and plot of the work (which always has a focus), the author can freely use any artistic means and bring any colours and the finest hues to the texture of the imagery, combining realistic and romantic methods. All that merely contributes to the richness and many-sidedness of the picture.

The more significant Soviet writings have always raised and solved such "eternal questions" as Man and History, the Destiny of an Individual and the Destiny of a People. And the intellectual content of the images (a term borrowed from L. Leonov) has also increased. Concrete generalisation is in harmony with the author's philosophical idea. The deepening historicity and greater concreteness, generalisation and conceptual portrayal of events and characters have produced a new type of novel, the epic, and new poetic genre and in drama a new kind of people's-heroic drama which depicted historically significant conflicts, had boldly drawn characters, and paid tribute to the might of the people.

Soviet writers are keenly aware of the significance of the new that is being asserted in our life. They are not just eyewitnesses of historical events. Most of them contribute actively to building a new world and understand the grandiose meaning of the events they are witnessing. Mayakovsky in his poems *Vladimir Ilich Lenin* and *Fine!* praised the October Revolution as a new stage in the history of mankind ("...from millennia of slavery blazing the way to the age of the Commune through want and rigour..."). The epic dimensions of the events, the growing consciousness of the new man who felt to be master and transformer of the world—all that called for a new artistic interpretation. The more rapidly socialism marched towards the shining summit of the Commune, the greater were the deeds of the hero building a new world, his thoughts and feelings, and accordingly, the artist's thought.

Historicity in Soviet literature deepens along with the victory of socialism and manifests itself in new forms. At every stage of its development, socialism appears as a new social structure which determines new forms of social consciousness. A new community of people emerges. Historicity is invested with new content, dictates a new attitude to the past (meaning pre-socialist formations which are viewed as the prehistory of mankind) and to the present—the heroic building of a new society—which has its own history, traditions, and stages of development. History itself elevates the artist to new heights from which he can see more clearly the interconnection of things and the motive forces of Soviet society. History is the best judge. It selects values (unerringly!), sweeping away all the false and transient things. As the historical approach to art is given a new objective basis, the role played by the artist's conscious attitude to the past, present, and future also increases. Art too, in this new perspective, selects the essential from the past and present to focus on the intransient. That accounts for the growing syntheticism of Soviet art, its greater conceptuality, and greater concrete generalisation.

The concrete fact is increasingly invested with historical content. The October Revolution, the Civil War, the New Economic Policy, industrialisation, collectivisation, and the Stakhanovite¹ movement—all are presented in a new light. At the same time greater importance attaches to dialectically coherent, monistic (to use the Marxist term) perception of history. As early as the 1930s, Soviet writers, in describing the revolutionary movement, the October Revolution, and the Civil War treated the past as a component part of the present. And their attitude to the past made the events portrayed relevant to the future. The class struggle of the time was shown with greater depth and vividness and, most important of all, the victory of socialism in history was depicted more graphically and expressively. Along with concreteness one sees growing syntheticism in the interpretation of events and facts and in the description of characters, and in the awareness of the meaning of historical events seen as a prelude to the triumph of

¹ *Stakhanovite*—from Alexei Stakhanov, a Soviet miner who devised a system of higher production: a worker whose production is consistently above average.—Ed.

socialism in the Soviet Union.

While such novels as *Russia Washed in Blood* by Artyom Vesioly were not concrete enough, took a generalised attitude to events and were replete with expressionist imagery (the maelstrom of change), the novels *Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov and *Bleak Morning* by Alexei Tolstoy, written in the 1930s, were at once concrete and general in portraying events and characters. In these novels history took more distinct and characteristic forms, and they were more epic in character.

With the victory of socialism Soviet literature came to regard the present in historical perspective. It was perceived both as growing out of the past and as a new milestone on the road to the future. The present was illumined by the light of the future. That stimulated writers' search for synthetic generalised means of identifying the main and historically significant events amidst the whirlpool of change. To achieve expressiveness writers intensify their images and focus attention on the main things. In the 1930s, Nikolai Pogodin and Vsevolod Vishnevsky argued furiously in favour of monumental drama, championed epic forms that could convey the spirit of events and the movement of the masses, opposed psychological and detailed material description (while not discarding the psychological bent in their own work) and looked for new forms of combining the concrete and the general. In the heat of the polemic these writers sometimes went to extremes and championed aesthetic devices which ran counter to the principles of psychological drama centred on an individual protagonist. That, incidentally, throws a sidelight on the trends in Soviet art at the time.

Art in the 1930s as a whole revealed a marked trend towards the epic, towards concrete generalisation and—in this connection—sought to make the image more expressive by exaggerating its characteristic features. It is interesting to trace the evolution of Leonid Leonov's aesthetic. His novel *The River Sott* is full of sharp contrasts and raw colours both in the description of the old (the life at the monastery symbolises the vileness of the old world) and in the depiction of the new. Uvadyev is a generalised type of a Bolshevik. It is a powerful, sharply etched character of a man who is used to overcoming difficulties. Leonid Leonov in that novel failed to achieve the main thing, i.e., to identify

concrete manifestations of the particular and the general, the psychological and the social (another character in the novel, the Bolshevik Potemkin, is spiritually rich; but for reasons of health he is unable to take part in the actual construction project). The novel *The Road to the Ocean* is an even more ambitious attempt than *The River Sott* at encompassing the past, the present, and the future, and giving generalised typical characters. That makes for the even greater use of contrast and colour in character portraits: the two antipodes, the communist Kurilov, and a former capitalist, Omelichev, their acts, feelings, thoughts, and desires. Members of the young generation are introduced in the novel and some story lines would be elaborated more profoundly in the novel *The Russian Forest* twenty years later.

Intensity, publicistic passion and impressionism mark the imagery of Katayev's novel *Time, Forward!* Everything in that novel is on the move, everything is developing, and there is an overriding sense of gathering speed. The writer tries to give a generalised image of Time.

Historical truth in these works is sharply etched. This is true not only of prose but also of drama which often combines realistic methods with romanticism (*An Optimistic Tragedy* by Vsevolod Vishnevsky).

Of course some of these ventures were more successful than others. The artists did not always achieve depth and completeness, especially in depicting social types. The individual did not always reflect historical content. There was a gap between psychological description of the hero and the description of important social phenomena (for example, *The Birth of a Hero* by Yuri Libedinsky). However, the general direction of the search was fruitful. Already in the 1930s Pogodin wrote his drama *The Man with a Rifle* in which the character of soldier Shadrin is at once intensely individual and attains the stature of a historical symbol. This lends epic character to the drama which conveys period detail and the meaning of the time in expressive touches and through sharp clashes of strong characters. It was then that Pogodin conceived of his trilogy about Lenin and started fruitful work on a historically important theme (the people and revolution, the leader of a new type, the awakening of the people and its creative endeavour, and the power of Lenin's truth). That work was crowned with the innova-

tory play called *The Third Pathétique*.

Socialism elevates artistic consciousness to a new height and brings new forms to art. Time understands itself in a new way philosophically and artistically.

Gorky's work in the 1930s had great importance for Soviet literature.

II

In the 1930s, Gorky's works revealed a keener sense of history, which brought new features to all the main genres of his work (novel, drama, essay, and short story). The writer created a new type of epic novel—a sweeping panorama combining description of actual events with imaginary typical characters and revealing the general course of history (*The Life of Klim Samgin*). In the field of drama, he created a new type of an essentially historical play which reveals the destinies of social classes and the role of the people in a transition period by telling the stories of remarkable individuals and typical characters (*Dostigayev and Others*). Turning to the present time in his cycles *Across the Soviet Union* and *Stories About Heroes*, he comes up with new types of stories and essays which combine keen perception of real facts and profound generalisations which reveal their historical significance by juxtaposing the present with the past and projection of the future.

The novel *The Life of Klim Samgin* is a good example of Gorky's concern with history. It is a major canvas, "a moving panorama of decades", as Lunacharsky described it. The novel spans a large period in the life of Russia beginning from the 1880s until the eve of the October Revolution. The writer himself described the novel as a chronicle ("Chronicle Over 40 Years"). But reading the novel we are exposed to such a wealth of thoughts, and are so carried away by the seething passions, the rises and falls of the characters that we forget the author's description of his novel as a chronicle. It is an epic both in the portrayal of events and the description of the heroes.

One is struck first of all by Gorky's historical accuracy, his skill in evoking events and historical circumstances with the authenticity of a historian. The past comes to life. It is as if we ourselves became part of the past and were partici-

pants and eye-witnesses of the events. No other work in our literature can match this novel in the precision with which real events are portrayed—the events on January 9, 1905, the December Uprising on Krasnaya Presnya, the funeral of Bauman, demonstrations in Petrograd on the occasion of the start of the First World War, and the February Revolution. On the other hand, *The Life of Klim Samgin* is unmatched in our literature for the portrayal of vivid human types (in all their psychological and social reality).

Gorky takes a very clear-cut attitude towards the events and characters. All the diversity of phenomena which he depicts (and the range of events covered is extremely wide) and all the different heroes (with their views, convictions, and struggles) are geared to the main aim—and that is to show the gathering revolutionary storm in Russia as the major phenomenon which determines the whole course of history, the positions of different people, their mentality, and lives. The narrative in the novel aims to show how the Bolshevik Leninist truth gathered momentum and fought its way to recognition in Russia. That provides the organising element of the novel, brings together all the diverse events into a single picture, lends the work coherence and atmosphere, and permeates the narrative with a single feeling. And that also gives Gorky great freedom in choosing artistic means, in arranging events and characters, in determining the place of action, and the composition of the pictures he draws. Gorky had only one concern, and that was to make the artistic texture and imagery more expressive in order to convey the meaning of the time.

So he chooses a special aspect which influences both the aesthetic means and the philosophical concept of the work. He concentrates on revealing the trends of thought in the 20th century and tracing their evolution over a large span of time (40 years), and on showing their essence by comparing them against the main phenomena of the time. Gorky emphasises the intellectual atmosphere to which he subordinates everything, even the description of events. At the same time he seeks maximum precision in describing events and tries to draw vivid characters in order to express through them (their emotional makeup, feelings, and thoughts) the social relations, contradictions, conflicts, and philosophies characteristic of the 20th century. All this presented a great challenge.

In fact, Gorky in *The Life of Klim Samgin* portrays events indirectly. His central figure is a bourgeois intellectual, a man of average ability who begins by flirting with the revolution and ends up by betraying it. All the events in the novel are presented as perceived by Klim Samgin. That created enormous difficulties for the writer. The main character was in striking contrast with events, and there was a gap between the content of history and the world perception of the hero, a man of confused consciousness and relativist views of life. This not to mention the person of the main hero, a mediocre "empty-souled" individual who had to be made a type, i. e., given particular features and some typical ones.

Undaunted by the challenges facing him, Gorky went about to implement his principles consistently and consciously. What did Gorky stand to gain from such an approach? To begin with, there was a special angle. All the diverse events depicted in the novel are reflected in a single human mind and thus assume a special tone and an individual interpretation. That is the method of intensification designed to give expressiveness to the novel. Gorky depicts events "from inside" and at the same time tells us about the peculiar world perception of his hero, the "fluidity" of his thoughts and feelings. Thus, the hero is linked with events and the reader with the hero. The reader experiences events and sees the world through the eyes of Samgin.

But Gorky does not stop there. He also puts Klim Samgin's world perception *to the test*—he exposes the hero to reality. But not only that: Gorky constantly brings Samgin in contact with other people, people who think alike and people who are his antipodes. He follows his hero over a large span of time to different cities and countries where he argues and talks on sundry questions and assimilates the thoughts of others. Thus, the novel is a complex web of story lines and conflicts. It conveys the intellectual atmosphere of the time. Gorky shows the different angles from which his characters perceive events. Opinions clash, and passions clash. That makes for greater expressiveness. Real events are sifted, first, through the perception of the title hero (and that perception keeps changing depending on the situation), and second, through the perception of like-thinking people (who are often afraid to face the truth, like Klim Samgin himself) and, third, through the perception of his

antipodes who are usually gifted people with a grasp of the essence of events. And that too can be described as intensification. Both the characters and the events are thus described on many planes and are seen from many angles. At times Gorky achieves a kind of stereoscopic effect as objects and events are seen from several angles at once.

In the plot of the novel we are constantly aware of the drift of events which determines the mentality and behaviour of people, the struggle of political and ideological trends in Russia during the three revolutions. That placed heavy demands on the accuracy and authenticity in describing real events. The writer reveals the intellectual atmosphere of the time indirectly, by describing the feelings and thoughts of his hero, to which he juxtaposes the central event of history, i.e., the revolutionary movement. And that required historical accuracy and a clear social stand in the description of the motives, acts, thoughts, and feelings of the characters.

Gorky does not avoid contrasts. On the contrary, he intensifies them. That helps him to get to the essence of events which are marked by acute contradictions, outbursts of popular wrath, upsurge of revolutionary forces and disintegration of the social fabric. That too can be described as intensification. The events and characters are contrasted and thus put in bolder relief. Let us recall the lusty colours which Gorky brings to describing capitalists—Varavka, Marina Zotova, and Berdnikov and the way the contradictions of the time are reflected in their thoughts, feelings, and actions, desiccating their souls, making them commit crimes or become accomplices in them (Berdnikov by evil design, and Marina Zotova, against her will, by the overwhelming force of circumstances). One thinks also of the tragic fate of the millionaire Lyutov, a talented man who succumbed to the evil reality of Russian capitalism.

These characters give concentrated expression to social phenomena. And as individuals and social types they stand comparison with the types created by world literary classics.

Consistently pursuing his principle of describing characters through their attitude to the revolutionary movement, Gorky in his epic shows what is really *great* and relevant in history (to *whom* the future belongs) and what is *ephemeral*, petty, and puny (like Klim Samgin) and doomed to death in spite of seeming omnipotence (like Varavka,

Marina Zotova, and Berdnikov).

Klim Samgin is also a concentration of characteristic features of reality. He is a special type of bourgeois intellectual, the last in the historical gallery of "the phoney heroes of history", "moderate-priced intellectuals", people with an "empty soul", as Gorky described them. They believe they are "the salt of the earth" and think they have a special role to play in society, that they can rule the world or at least instruct people how they should live. Gorky makes that type remarkably expressive, describing him from the psychological, social, and historical angle. Gorky succeeds in making even Samgin's lack of individuality, drabness and inertia, the vehicle for expressing typical phenomena.

Through Klim Samgin, Gorky shows above all the degradation of the individual in bourgeois society. He exposes his character showing a bundle of base feelings and thoughts nestling in him, showing his meanness and wickedness, especially in his relations with women, and his vanity and cowardice at crucial moments. Gorky boldly intensified colours and dramatised events just as Dostoyevsky did when he wanted to show the depth of degradation to which a man can fall if he forgets about his humanity and mortgages his soul to the Devil of base passions. Gorky even used some methods to which symbolists claimed monopoly (the system of doubles, irrational projections, and phantastic metamorphoses). But with Gorky, these methods are used to realistic ends because they correspond to the object of description and help reveal and emphasise Klim Samgin's depravity.

Klim Samgin's behaviour is also described with depth. There is a political accent on Klim Samgin's confrontation with the revolutionary movement. Gorky exposes the traitor type, the type who, seeing that the revolution uplifts people, passes himself off for a revolutionary claiming to have taken part or even led the revolutionary people in 1905. In fact, Klim Samgin—in his behaviour and mentality—is closer to the counter-revolution as is eventually revealed in the years of reaction.

Thus Gorky makes Klim Samgin a typical character by interweaving different levels of narrative. In Klim Samgin, Gorky traces the decay of bourgeois consciousness. This lends a philosophical meaning to Klim Samgin as he is contrasted with the all-conquering revolutionary movement.

Klim Samgin embodies a characteristic phenomenon of the 20th century.

He and people who think like him are opposed in the novel by a gallery of Bolsheviks headed by Kutuzov. Gorky is known to have attached great significance to that juxtaposition. He worked very hard on his portraits of Bolsheviks, adding chapters and enlarging descriptions of characters, especially Kutuzov.

In his portrayal of Bolsheviks, Gorky achieves expressiveness and shows his characters from many angles, boldly dramatising situations and condensing colours. Kutuzov in the novel is drawn in close-up. He stands out as a talented individual, which is seen in his appearance, his thoughts, and behaviour. He appears infrequently, but always at crucial moments. Kutuzov is Samgin's superior in everything, although in the story he seems to be somewhat in the shadow while Klim Samgin, that ghost of history, "the devil's dummy", keeps popping into the foreground.

In portraying the sweep of events and the surge of the revolutionary tide Gorky invests Kutuzov with symbolic meaning. He shows that the Bolsheviks led by Kutuzov relate differently to the revolutionary movement and history than Klim Samgin. Kutuzov's perception of the world does not diverge from reality. Gorky shows a new type of intellectual, a new type of individual born in battles for lofty ideals. Kutuzov thinks boldly, assesses events soberly, and his predictions usually come true. He is a character all of a piece. Samgin envies Kutuzov and at the same time fears him, as he fears everything that spells change.

Kutuzov often quotes Lenin when he speaks. Students of Gorky's work have shown that this is not accidental. Lenin's understanding of history lies at the basis of the ideological and aesthetic concept of Gorky's novel. That determined its innovatory features. In drawing vivid characters and showing real events through their individual perceptions, Gorky demonstrates that the Bolsheviks embody the greatness of history. The novel reverberates with the powerful echoes of the events of the 20th century and the mounting revolutionary movement in Russia. In Gorky's novel, the prehistory of socialism is equated to the prehistory of mankind.

A keen sense of history in depicting both events and characters, original artistic methods and devices, richness

and vividness of idiom enable Gorky to create an epic. Historical truth becomes artistic truth.

These qualities mark many other works of Gorky. His cycles of essays *Across the Soviet Union* and *Stories About Heroes* take up the themes which engaged his mind in his later years—how a new breed of people, men with a new socialist conscience and a new morality are formed.

The concreteness and expressiveness achieved by Gorky is exemplified by the image of the Bearded Soldier who first appears in the third essay of *Across the Soviet Union*.

Gorky paints him in bold touches creating a monumental figure of a man who has been exposed to many experiences and has come to believe the only truth on earth which he is ready to defend. It is the Bolshevik truth. A lot of the expressiveness comes from the Bearded Soldier's speech. He is sparing of words and he weighs them carefully. Behind these words is the history of his people, its suffering and great deeds. The main feature of the Bearded Soldier is his growing awareness and confidence of his strength, the strength of the people who knows how to stand up for justice. It is a many-sided character. The Bearded Soldier opposes imperialist war ("I was at the Japanese war and I was at this war, too, but no more soldiering for me...", "this blight must be uprooted..."). He speaks about the power of workers and recalls the Revolution of 1905. He believes in the solidarity of workers. It is a character of great epic dimensions. That he is flesh and blood of the people is seen at the end of the story when the Soldier confronts a sceptic who is used to treating common people with mocking condescension. But times have changed and the Soldier more than holds his own against the sceptic's stinging remarks. "... Woke me up, you did. I'll tell you this, hatted gentlemen: we'll take the land in our hands, that's for sure! And we'll change everything on it."

"It'll be as round as a water melon,' another gentleman, wearing a cap, chipped in derisively.

"It sure will! ' confirmed the Soldier.

"I hear you are going to raze down mountains? '

"So what? We'll raze them down if they are in the way.'

"And will you have rivers flow backwards? '

"They will flow where we direct them. You're laughing, mister? '

"The mocker was a plump round-faced man with

a black moustache.

"The Soldier gripped his shoulder, shook him, and said, putting his face close to the man's :

"Just you wait, the people will see light, and they will give you hell, you stupid ass, so that you'll have to bow to them."

Gorky has this lyrical postscript to that scene: "I recorded that episode at home... I was saving it for the end of the book which I had long conceived (*The Life of Klim Samgin—V.N.*). Up to the very end of the book I set great store by that Soldier in whom a human being has awakened, the builder of new life and new history. And in my funeral mass for the past he was to be the bass singer."

Gorky's story ends with a vivid picture of the building of the Dnieper Power Dam. Addressing writers, Gorky urges them to reveal the poetry of work and to show the new man at his full height. In his *Across the Soviet Union* and *Stories About Heroes* Gorky provided models of powerful, sweeping, and concrete portrayal of people's characters against the background of major historical events.

III

An artist's close link with the new, and his wish to understand ongoing changes in the light of the new have a great influence on his world outlook and his work. It changes the writer's attitude to life and accordingly the conceptions of his works and the methods of typification. The depth of the writer's historic thought is very important in this connection.

The history of the writing of Alexei Tolstoy's trilogy *Ordeal* is very revealing.

Tolstoy worked on that trilogy for more than twenty years (from 1919 to 1941). And the evolution of his artistic thought and style tells us much about Soviet literature. Alexei Tolstoy was only able to reach complete balance in his portrayal of characters and events when he overcame his biased attitude to history.

One cannot gainsay the fact that the vivid characterisations in *The Sisters* and description of the feelings of Dasha and Katya Bulavin match the best of Russian classics. But the first edition of the book, which he wrote when the future

was still shrouded in a thick veil for him, reveals glaring contradictions between living truth and the artist's subjective notions. *The Sisters* is essentially a psychological novel in which private lives come into conflict with revolutionary events.

In 1918 the writer's approach to events is different. By giving prominence to Telegin's experience in the Civil War and showing unheard-of heroism and self-sacrifice of the rebellious people, Tolstoy draws vivid portraits of Bolsheviks and leaders of the masses (Kommissar Gymza), turns a sharply satirical pen against spiritually bereft and brutal White Guard officers and generals, the enemies of the Revolution. However, historical chronicle (in the first version of the novel) prevailed over psychological characterisation. The writer is concerned most of all not with typifying heroes and events but with describing events. As regards composition the novel is far from perfect. Some of its chapters are a synopsis of the events of the Civil War.

The novel *Bleak Morning* is a more streamlined and clear-cut work than 1918. In it, Alexei Tolstoy uses new principles of characterising heroes and shows their lives in close conjunction with the stormy events. There is an intimate link between the individual and picturesquely diverse destinies of heroes and the events full of dramatic struggles. The logic of history and the logic of human behaviour interact to reveal the typical and the characteristic in life. That is achieved due to a profound historical sense.

When Tolstoy started *Ordeal* the question of typification of events and characters engaged him. He saw typification as the way to artistic truth.

The main thing for him was to find the dialectic in the behaviour of his characters and the development of events in order to convey the passion of the Revolution, its sweep, and its awesome grandeur. He chose to unfold events gradually to show how "a handful of St. Petersburg proletarians led by Lenin's 'outburst of ideas' plunged in the bloody mess of Russia, won and organised the country".¹ He confessed in his letter to V. Polonsky: "In my novel I take living people with all their weaknesses and with all their strength, involved in a truly meaningful cause."²

¹ *Russian Writers on Literary Work*, Vol. 4, Leningrad, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1956, p. 474 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*

He did not want to gloss over or ignore the difficulties and complex conditions in which the Revolution took place. In the same letter to V. Polonsky he stressed: "I begin at the most difficult moment—the German occupation of the Ukraine when nobody knew how far it would go... And what of the future? Well, the future was shrouded in an awesome fog..."¹ And he did not want to show the enemy as a caricature and did not want to minimise the enemy's strength: "I need the generals as symbols of the powerful forces opposing the Revolution. The more vividly and objectively I describe them the more formidable that strength will appear, which in fact it was (a million and a half Cossacks is no trifling matter)."²

And he emphasised (for himself) the importance for the writer to take a definite stand, and to have a profound grasp of the historical significance of ongoing events: "The author takes the side of that handful of proletarians, hence the confidence of final victory; Lenin's interpretation of the course of events; complete objectivity of separate parts, i.e., the texture of the novel—the texture of tragedy, always to speak on behalf of the protagonist and never to look at him from outside..."³

Alexei Tolstoy in *Bleak Morning* demonstrates his prowess at drawing characters of very different people (from the sailor Chugai to the anarchist Makhno). He shows the poignancy of all-embracing class struggle during the revolution and its tragic dimensions. But his stand is definite: he is unreservedly on the side of the Bolsheviks. And that enables him to trace the arduous and triumphal march of the Revolution and to wave his description of characters into description of history. Flesh and blood people are seen as makers of history. Tolstoy reveals the intransigent meaning of the Revolution which moulds new kind of people and new characters. Everything in the novel gets a perspective. The flames of the Revolution shine through the destinies of individuals.

The inner world of the Bulavin sisters, and Vadim Roshchin, which is self-contained, tragic and full of doom in *The Sisters*, is illumined by new bright light. The charact-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 475.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

ers link their lives with the Revolution; they find their place in life after living through moral upheavals. The epigraph for the novel *1918* reads: "Thrice wrung out in water, thrice bathed in blood, thrice boiled in caustic. Who so clean as we?" and the novel invests it with artistic content. It shows the socialist revolution as the justest, wisest and most humane of revolutions. It uplifts people's souls, changes their notions about the meaning of life and gives them a chance to learn what genuine happiness means.

Alexei Tolstoy has recourse to a special form of intensifying images which changes as his concept of history and the idea and aesthetic concept of the novel deepen.

Already in *The Sisters* Tolstoy brings different heroes into sharp collision. The author creates contrasting parallels, and dramatically shifts the focus and lights and shadows to show the fickle way in which the base and the exalted, the ugly and the beautiful interweave in life. The writer's sympathies are on the side of the ever pure human source of life—"the eternal heart". Proceeding from this, he applies bold dashes to paint the picture of the decay of bourgeois intelligentsia on the eve of the First World War. He exposes the emptiness of the decadent poet Bessonov, ridicules the affected liberalism of Katya's husband Smokovnikov, and brings some grotesque colours to the description of the members of various decadent literary circles.

The moral upheavals of Dasha and Katya Bulavin in the novel *The Sisters* were largely confined to their personal relationships. They reflected the banality of the surrounding life indirectly, being themselves pure and vulnerable creatures. But their link with the stormy events of their time was tenuous and the roar of these events reached like distant thunderbolts the parlour of the Bulavin sisters.

In *1918* Alexei Tolstoy invests greater social and historical meaning in the moral quests of his characters. And there again the writer resorts to the device of intensified imagery, especially in telling the story of Dasha Bulavin. He throws Dasha in the thick of events, makes her meet the sinister Savinkov, and the anarchist Mamont Dalsky, takes her through the inferno of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy and brings her to the brink of moral fall. The complex events, portrayed in sharp contrasting colours, carry Tolstoy's heroes with them, history intrudes upon their world and makes them re-assess their acts and their lives.

Tolstoy does not yet achieve, in that novel, harmony between the description of historical events and the stories of his heroes. But in showing the moral torment of his characters Tolstoy is selective, concentrating attention on the high points in their lives marking dramatic changes in their feelings and thoughts.

One may recall the dynamism, precision of detail, and vividness with which Tolstoy conveys the impression produced on Dasha by Lenin addressing workers at the factory. Tolstoy records with minutest detail the reactions of the participants in the rally to Lenin's speech. He draws with expressive touches the figure of a fellow "with gleaming teeth" who strikes Dasha with his robustness, joy of life, and self-confidence: "...come with us to the front the day after tommorow! Will you? You'll come to grief here in Moscow, anyhow... We're taking an accordion, my lass..."¹ Dasha is deeply affected by all this. Two truths clash in her mind: the truth of the Revolution which was being revealed in starkly simple words by a man with a large bald bumpy head and crow's feet around his eyes to the mass of workers who listened to him avidly; and the truth of Savinkov's Alliance for the Defence of Motherland and Freedom, the conspirators who were egging Dasha on towards committing a crime. Dasha's pure heart prompted her that the truth is on the side of these stern working men with hearts of gold.

The palette of colours in *Bleak Morning* is more diverse than in *1918*. At the same time the general picture of events and destinies of the characters, of typical individuals, is more harmonious and coherent. Tolstoy displays greater inventiveness in depicting both events and human beings. He abandons the idea of comprehensive description of the Civil War and focuses attention on the crucial battles in the south. He introduces more characters of the people. The narrative is marked by ease, with the writer freely passing from one event to another, intermingling various episodes and turning to different areas of the life of a vast country rocked by Revolution. But in the narrative itself there is a nucleus, a core which radiates light and energy permeating disparate episodes and bringing them into a single picture,

¹ A. Tolstoy, *Ordeal. A Trilogy*, Book 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p. 258.

lending them coherence and artistic completeness.

This organising element in Tolstoy's novel is the idea of the purifying storm of the Revolution. Moral purity as a sign of humanity, the main idea of *The Sisters*, is, in *Bleak Morning*, filled with historical and social meaning and is linked with socialist revolution. Characters of the people in particular are marked by moral purity and genuine humanity, and display deep feelings and sterling qualities.

There is something in common between the way characters of the people are described by Tolstoy and Gorky. Tolstoy tries to paint them in bold touches, in all their historical originality, admiring their strength of character, talent, resourcefulness, and derring-do (Lagutin) but most important of all admiring their integrity and dedication. Every type brings with him a life story, throwing light on some important and characteristic phenomena. This is what lends epic character to Tolstoy's types of the common people. They are portrayed with great insight and are as large as life, facing the winds of history. They are part of the Russia which was rising from blood and suffering to a historical creation and was asserting, on the smouldering ruins of the past, the only human truth on earth. The narrative in *Bleak Morning* in fact revolves around the types of the people. And that is also an instance of intensified imagery.

Whatever facts or episodes the writer describes—whether of *large scope* (the defence of Tsaritsyn, the battle of the Salsky Steppes, workers' uprising in Yekaterinoslav, the crushing blow of Budyonny's cavalry troops on the army of General Shkuro) and of *small scope* (the story of Anisya, and the story of Katya's pupil, Ivan Gavrikov)—the purifying influence of the Revolution makes itself felt. That influence permeates every situation and gives a new meaning to the theme of motherland lost and regained, and the intellectual's search of his place in the Revolution. Revolution is shown as an outburst of popular energy. By pursuing the main lines of narrative, the novel builds up towards its finale, the victory of the Revolution. Numerous episodes from the history of the Revolution and the Civil War, and complex plot lines merge into one turbulent stream which has a unifying idea, i.e., to show the grandeur of the Revolution, its cathartic character and its creativeness in all its stern reality and beauty. History comes to life in the pages of the novel and one is struck by the vividness and coher-

ence and vigour of life which was a feature of the epoch of the socialist revolution.

Historicity intensifies the analytical element in socialist realism, insures a fullness of perception of the world, and helps the writer to break new ground in the field of ideas and artistic form.

IV

Depiction of the growing awareness of the popular masses was a major aesthetic challenge to literature. After the October Revolution everything in Russia began to move, awakened, and sprouted like grass after a spring shower.

In his talk to young workers who made their debuts in literature, on June 11, 1931, Gorky confessed that he found it hard to depict "one of the common phenomena of Soviet life", i.e., "the emergence of the new man who seems to be in the throes of breaking out of some kind of hard and tight eggshell". "I have tried to write about it nine times," said Gorky, "but nothing good came of it. The words which I have at my command cannot do full justice to the inner energy and the enormous content that must be expressed in simple, very clear, and very powerful words."

As a matter of fact, Gorky brilliantly traced the emergence of the new man by placing the powerful character of the Bolshevik Ryabinin next to Sister Taisia in the play *Dostigayev and Others*. Such a juxtaposition of images was fairly characteristic of Soviet literature. Thus, next to Levinson there is Morozka who is evolving towards a new Bolshevik consciousness (*The Rout* by Alexander Fadeyev). To dramatise the shedding of old delusions, Trenev places the Communist Koshkin next to Lyubov Yarovaya (*Lyubov Yarovaya*).

And the whole plot of *An Optimistic Tragedy* by Vsevolod Vishnevsky focuses on revealing the role of the Commissar as the proponent of the new thought of the time, the idea of conscious service to the Revolution, whose influence on the masses is decisive.

In seeking truthful portrayal of new phenomena, the writers who described collectivisation and the new construction projects of the Five-Year Plans gave prominence to the active figures of Communists who organised and educated

the masses. These heroes have risen from the grassroots and they have traversed the revolutionary path with the people to become its leaders. These men of action are magnetic personalities and that shows when they tackle the most difficult of tasks. Their influence on the masses stems not from their position or post but from their integrity, their belief in their true cause and self-sacrifice in the struggle for their ideals. They were not always revealed in all their spiritual richness and they sometimes erred. But they had a grasp of historic truth for they had lived complex lives of struggle in the underground or in the Civil War. Their heroic past like the programme of action which they have to offer—organising a collective farm, or building a giant factory in the wilderness—all this convinced the masses by force of example (and Lenin repeatedly said that concrete example and model for action are the most convincing way of agitation). Communists had a strong ideology and organisation on their side.

Even if a Communist is not the central character in the story, his presence is invariably felt.

One could multiply examples of Soviet literature's discoveries in depicting the growing popular consciousness. The important thing, however, is to trace the general trend. The principle of typification and the balance of the particular and the general, of the ordinary and the extraordinary in the characters changed.

Why did a simple story of a working class lad who embraces the Revolution and takes part in the building of socialism—in many ways an autobiographical story—why did that story have such a world-wide impact? And why did the character of Pavel Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovsky's novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*, which is so truthful it seems to have been taken directly from life, become symbolic? Soviet partisans and underground fighters during the Great Patriotic War assumed the name of Korchagin. The secret is that the novel reflected new principles of typification in Soviet literature. Pavel Korchagin's character has a special kind of authenticity. It reflects in artistic form new patterns of life. Pavel Korchagin's own life was tragic. Ill health prevented him from being involved directly in building socialism and in Party work. His innovatory principles enabled the writer to remain true to life and to show how in that extreme situation Pavel Korchagin dis-

played his heroism. A lot has been written about it and comparisons have been made between Korchagin and characters in bourgeois novels who in similar circumstances were doomed to spiritual death, loneliness, and suffering. Not so Pavel Korchagin, who behaves like a hero. It is not only that he "rises above" circumstances and overcomes them. In keeping with the truth of life, the writer shows that the atmosphere and the environment in which Pavel lives and which have been created by the victory of the October Revolution help him in adversity and enable him to display fortitude and find an active role for himself.

And that is an instance of artistic innovation because Pavel Korchagin, while being exceptional, is just as typical as when he took part in the Revolution and built the railway. The writer identifies and reveals the special kind of unity of heroic character and typical circumstances at all the stages of its evolution. Korchagin's heroism, and his unusual story dramatise the typical socialist relations, the new and beautiful things at every level of our life, which is a new form of human community. That ensured a long life for the character of Korchagin.

In the 1930s, the dominant themes in Soviet literature were the transformation of man's consciousness, change of his nature, feelings, and thoughts. A new aspect became discernible in the characterisation of the heroes: the writers tried to understand what makes the character tick, to see the unity of the private and the common concerns, and the emerging new mentality when the character's deeply ingrained instincts, habits, and notions change, acquire new meaning, and take the form of a conscious attitude to life. In these conditions, it was particularly important to create a character that would reflect the process of resolving contradictions which rent apart the human soul. Critics at the time had many theories of exactly how one should portray "the living man", the clash between his instinct and his reason, the process of ridding oneself of outdated attitudes, etc.

The innovatory nature of Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* consists not only in creating typical characters of Bolsheviks (Davydov, Nagulnov, Razmetnov) and not only in exposing the psychology of a dangerous enemy, a new type of kulak, Yakov Ostrovnov. Sholokhov is also to be credited with creating the character of Maidannikov, who reflects the remoulding of mass consciousness. One can

safely say that Maidannikov is at once a flesh-and-blood character and a social type reflecting the nature of his time. Sholokhov's analytical skill enabled him to trace the complex dialectic of Maidannikov's thoughts and feelings, the conflicting strands in his soul, and his inner struggles which take a form characteristic of the time of collectivisation.

Maidannikov is an extremely contradictory character and yet he creates an impression of wholeness. That happens because Sholokhov was able to balance the particular and the general in such a way as to cast new light on the hero's motivations, his feelings, and acts. The contradictions in Maidannikov's soul are not something that concerns only him. They reflect the social conditions in which the vast mass of the peasants gradually came to accept a new mode of life. It must be borne in mind that this change had implications as important as the change of the mass consciousness which had taken place during the October Revolution. Sholokhov did not confine himself to depicting the contradictions in Maidannikov's soul. He shows how new attitudes triumph in the character's consciousness. Maidannikov consciously embraces a new life to join the collective farm and to become a foremost worker. His character, then, is a symbol of the victory of new consciousness. And that, against the background of the epoch in which millions of peasants embarked on the socialist road, lends coherence to Maidannikov's character and makes him a vehicle for important historical comment. A living character becomes an artistic type.

Leonov said in one of his speeches in the 1930s: "It fell to us to witness the emergence of new unheard-of human passions and aspirations. We live in an atmosphere saturated with advanced ideas of the age... Our country today is a giant laboratory which forges new morals, a new ethos, and a new socialist humanity."

It was extremely difficult to depict that process and create new vivid typical characters. It often happened that the description of important events overshadowed the psychological description of characters. That was true even of such mature masters as F.Gladkov, I.Ehrenburg, and V.Ilienkov. It was not by chance that Gorky criticised the first version of Gladkov's novel *Energy*. The description of the process of work, the picture of the construction pit for a new power dam given in an impressionistic manner,

with savouring of details of industrial labour, turned out to be more compelling than the psychological description of the characters who are behind the new reality. There was thus a gap between the description of circumstances and of characters. Fyodor Gladkov had to work a great deal to achieve harmony between the main parts of his novel as regards the portrayal of typical characters and typical circumstances.

Valentin Katayev's novel *Time, Forward!* also tells us something about the difficulty of making artistic discoveries in a description of typical characters undertaken just after the events. We have already noted the main merit of Katayev's novel. The writer managed to convey in a concentrated and expressive manner the pace of his time. The description of enthusiastic labour in Katayev's novel went hand-in-hand with the generalised image of time. The impressionistic manner enabled the writer to single out the main things. Valentin Katayev came up with a special kind of saga. But his novel obviously lacked psychological depth in the description of characters.

The traits of the characters and facts of their lives were merely enumerated, and were not fleshed out, as it were. We know about Margulies only from his actions but we are unable to place him as an individual, and we cannot see inside his soul. The same is true of the construction team leader Ischenko. The writer felt that a character should be described from many angles. And he tells us the facts of Ischenko's life, how he was a farm labourer, fought in the Civil War together with his sailor brother, returned to his village to resume labouring, and then joined the collective farm. The author even shows him as a family man. But one reads Ischenko's biography as a mere biography. We see neither the evolution of the character nor what singles him out as an individual. We can only guess at all that.

Meanwhile literature faced the task of combining a picture of the time with the artistic description of human types whose individuality and life stories throw light on their time (or its characteristic features). Alexander Malyskin set out to solve that task in his novel *People From an Out-of-the-Way Place*. The idea of the novel is interesting. In describing the events and characters, the writer tries to show the deep changes taking place in life. For that purpose, he describes grassroots characters "from an out-of-the-way

place", and he places them in a seething world of a major construction site on the Urals. Step by step he traces the change of his characters' mentality and shows how the individual "rises to his full height".

He is inclined to intensify colours and interweaves the ordinary and the extraordinary in a peculiar way. And when he describes the town of Mshansk, its past and present, his writing is reminiscent of the *skaz*, or stylised folk legend, as he highlights the moments which show that new life is reaching to the remotest corners of the land, upturning the soil on which philistinism and instincts of private property are growing, bringing there far-going changes. In general, Malyshkin's novel is marked by dialectical depth in depicting the struggle between the new and the old and their specific features at the new stage of social development. Psychological description of the characters is profoundly analytical.

The writer tries to achieve correspondence between the finest nuance of feeling and the circumstances. He describes circumstances with stark truth and shows the sharpening class struggle during the building of socialism. He places his characters Pyotr Soustin and Ivan Zhurkin on opposite sides of the ideological barricades. The writer describes with historical precision the difficulties which the Bolsheviks had to overcome at the initial period of giant industrial construction. They had to start everything from scratch, overcome fierce resistance of the enemy, deal with sloppy workers, money grabbers, and educate illiterates, and they were hamstrung by lack of skilled manpower. Perhaps few other works in Soviet literature evoke the atmosphere of the construction projects of the 1930s with such accuracy as *People From an Out-of-the-Way Place*. The writer can appreciate that not only as a student of Soviet literature but as a person who was in Magnitogorsk in 1932.

Truthful re-creation of the atmosphere of a construction site, and the description of the struggle between the new and the old in the 1930s—all this is a great merit of Malyshkin's novel. But more than that. The writer managed to fuse analysis and synthesis and to show how a new type of individual comes into being in these conditions. Truthful description of the circumstances is combined with careful attention to the novel features in the mentality and feelings of the positive characters. The writer attaches historical

significance to that process.

This is what accounts for innovatory nature of Malyshkin's psychological analysis in tracing the evolution of the attitudes of Tishka Kulikov and Ivan Zhurkin. The writer brings psychological flair and shows in all its complexity the awakening of the hero's consciousness and the element of the new mentality which gradually triumph over hide-bound attitudes. The growth of the hero is thus traced from the initial stages, when the process is set in motion (as when Tishka Kulikov sees that he can be as good as the next man) until the individual "rises to his full height" and dignity (as in the case of Ivan Zhurkin). Ivan Zhurkin and Tishka Kulikov become more and more active and want to be involved in useful work and contribute to the construction project.

The evolution of Ivan Zhurkin's character is described with profound knowledge of life, and here Malyshkin pioneers some new methods.

It is to be regretted that Malyshkin managed to write only one of the two parts of *People From an Out-of-the-Way Place*. But even what he wrote gives us an idea of the innovatory conception of the novel. The fact that the novel traced the process of growing awareness among ordinary people, and did so even as the events were taking place, bringing a profound sense of the historical importance of these changes—all this lent significance to Malyshkin's characterisations and monumentality to the novel. It was a harbinger of a new type of epic in Soviet literature.

It must be stressed that breakthroughs in Soviet literature are prepared gradually and are the result of the efforts of many writers. Life is diverse, and every writer pinpoints some important aspects of it and tries to record them in a new form. Common creative effort produces many innovations and lays down new traditions.

Soviet literature in the 1930s was preoccupied with a search for new subjects and artistic methods. That period saw striking change in the work of many prose writers, poets, and dramatists. For example, it was in the 1930s that Konstantin Fedin, Leonid Leonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, Marietta Shaginyan, and Nikolai Tikhonov got second wind, as it were, and took up topical subjects. The palette of realistic colours was enriched by the search for new stories, and for ways to give greater scope to the portrayal of the

historic change taking place in life.

Konstantin Paustovsky's experience at the time is interesting. A lyrical writer of great perceptiveness, adept at conveying the mood of the character through description of nature, he followed Gorky's advice and tuned to the theme of socialist construction. He went to Kara-Bugaz, a shallow gulf on the Caspian, and to Colchis (West Georgia) where the Bolsheviks were transforming outlying areas by reclaiming deserts and draining marshes. Paustovsky drew on real facts to write stories of large scope in which one felt the throbbing pulse of life.

One is struck by the compressed energy and telling imagery in Paustovsky's stories. Diverse facts and events are brought together in a single picture to highlight the important and characteristic things and to show how life changes and moves. The ordinary and the extraordinary are combined in Paustovsky's stories when he describes circumstances (the past and present of Kara-Bugaz and Colchis) and characters. The important thing for him is to show the transformative activity of the Bolsheviks and the impact of their daring undertakings.

The methods used by Paustovsky are romantic, but they fully correspond to the theme and ideas of his work. One can say that it is a new kind of romanticism, a realistic romanticism prompted by awareness of the magnitude of what the Soviet people were doing. The unusual in Paustovsky's stories is not something mysterious or defying understanding but something that shows the strength of man's will, the strength of conscious and purposeful efforts of the hero. Romanticism is inspired by real-life processes.

The "Saga of Glauber Salt" is related in *Kara-Bugaz* as a true story full of struggle and the triumph of creative reason.

Paustovsky's story combines documentary approach with dramatic stories of unusual people (the geologist Shatsky and the Bolshevik Miller, engineers Davydov and Khorobrykh, the geological scientist Prokofiev). Documentarism (the story of how Lieutenant Zherebtsov discovered Kara-Bugaz) is combined with emotionalism and poetic passion in describing the untold riches of Kara-Bugaz.

Paustovsky resorts to ornamental prose seeking to convey the national colour and describe the Turkmens. He weaves folk legends and ballads into his narratives. The transformations wrought by the Bolsheviks in the national borderlands

of Russia are shown in a romantic light, but very realistically. They are the result of heroic human effort. To show how unusual these changes are, Paustovsky creates a contrast between the past and the present of Kara-Bugaz and looks to its wonderful future. There is a faint mist of legend over real life, which in fact becomes legendary.

Thus unfolds the history of Kara-Bugaz where everything changes, especially the life of the people. The key episode expressing the message of the story is the meeting of an old Turkmen, Faireddin, with Lenin at a Congress of the Soviets. It is a fact but, viewed against the background of history and the changes which took place in the life of Turkmen since the October Revolution, it comes across as a legend which gives insight into the destiny of a nation.

"Lenin asks Faireddin why he does not speak at the Congress. Faireddin replies: 'I come from a land called Ust-Urt and also Kara-Kum. We have a lot of poverty and thirst, sand and salt. You think ... about making poor people happy and we think about water. But we have no water! The Allah has dried up our land ten fathoms deep, and even rain dries up before it falls on earth. There are rivers flowing under the sands but their water is bitter like the skin of a Persian orange. Our country has been wilting since the time of Timur. What shall we do, comrade? ... You are great and you are powerful. You are a great man, you have a sharp ear and a sharp eye. But how can you help us Turkmen?'

"Lenin laughed and said to old Faireddin: 'The Bolsheviks can do what Allah and Timur cannot do, Faireddin.'

"Faireddin shook his head:

'If you walk with a hunchback,' he replied, 'don't stand to your full height not to draw attention to the man's hunched back. If you talk to a man from the Kara-Kum, don't laugh at him and don't promise the impossible.'"¹

But the impossible happened. The Bolsheviks accomplished a miracle.

"And came the day of great triumph. The clear water from the Amu flowed to the Uzboi and the sand did not steal a single bucketful of it.

"Several years hence the sands would overgrow with

¹ K. Paustovsky, *Selected Works*, in six volumes, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1957, p. 513 (in Russian).

cotton and grape vines, elms and figs. A miserable land, parched like the tongue of a dog which died of thirst, would drink water like people drink wine."¹

There is no plot in the conventional sense of the word in Paustovsky's *Kara-Bugaz*. Events, facts, and life stories form an elaborate and bright tapestry. On the whole, that extraordinarily vivid and dramatic picture holds up a faithful mirror to the aspect of life described.

Paustovsky articulates his poetic principles. In his view, "...a fact presented in a literary way, discarding unnecessary detail and exaggerating some characteristic features, with a light touch of imagination, reveals the heart of things a hundred times more vividly and clearly than a truthful and factually precise inventory."²

Paustovsky follows that principle in *Kara-Bugaz*. Just as the events are depicted in a compressed manner, so the characters are shown in a few deft touches which reveal their dominant features: strong will (the Estonian Miller), research talent (Prokofiev), enthusiasm (Khorobrykh).

Building engineer Khorobrykh, a man with the face of Chaliapin and the carriage of a soldier, is a striking figure. Until last he has preserved some of the features which he had acquired during the period of "War Communism". That shows in his brusque quick movements and determined actions. For all that, he is a talented man with a daring mind and a tender heart.

The sketchy description of circumstances is in harmony with the bold manner of describing characters. The writer brings sharp contrasts to the story of Kara-Bugaz and Colchis, reveals their untold riches and outlines the prospects, and in the same bold strokes describes the characters who are putting into life an ambitious programme to transform nature.

Paustovsky singles out the dominant feature in every character and shows how it is revealed when the character confronts adversity. This is not to suggest that characters in Paustovsky's stories are flat. However, by emphasising a character's leading trait, he makes it a generalised type.

It is not by chance that Paustovsky regards will power as a trait shared by explorers and revolutionaries. He sees that

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

² *Ibid.*, p. 458.

trait in the geologist Karelin, the first explorer of Central Asian deserts, who overcame enormous difficulties, and in the revolutionary Miller, who faced death in the name of the future. The world is being transformed by the will of such people, says Paustovsky.

In *Colchis* Paustovsky combines in a new way the description of characters and circumstances. While romantic colours remain, they carry new content. The author finds new opportunities for combining concrete description of the method of marsh-draining in Colchis with depiction of the changes in the mentality of people involved in socialist construction. That makes for deeper characterisation. There is greater individuality and character evolution.

Individualisation and many-sided description of characters takes on added significance because *Colchis* is concerned with the developing consciousness of common Mingrel people, an ethnic group in the Caucasus. In *Kara-Bugaz* the influence of industrialisation on the life of the national borderlands of Russia was treated as an overall theme and it was only individualised in the colourful figure of the folk singer Bekmet.

In *Colchis*, that theme moves into the foreground and is revealed through the lives of many people. Common working people, the hunter Gulia, old man Artem Korkia, and construction site superintendent Mikho are shown by Paustovsky in the process of change as they become actively drawn into the building of socialism. Paustovsky obviously admires their daring boldness and ingenuity. He conveys with remarkable finesse and good humour the national traits of his characters, and the ornamental prose studded with unusual metaphors conveys the atmosphere of Colchis and contributes to local flavour. However, Paustovsky's main concern is to glorify the growing consciousness of his characters. His romantic methods enable the writer to show that characteristic process of Soviet life in a graphic form.

Along with a broad panorama of the highlights of socialist construction (new construction projects on the Dnieper river, in Kharkov, Stalingrad, Kuznetsk basin, and Magnitogorsk) Soviet literature of the 1930s elaborates new methods of describing the heroes and the spiritual richness of the new man. In the early half of the 1930s, the principal concern of Soviet literature was to show the transformations in the popular consciousness under the impact of

socialist construction. That was the most widespread event and it was extensively covered in literature. In the second half of the 1930s, the new challenge was to portray the new man as already moulded by the conditions of socialist construction, marking a new stage in the development of the individual.

Soviet literature was at first unable to meet that challenge fully. Scrutiny of the inner world of the characters tended to narrow the scope of the narrative, restricting it to concrete facts. There came a flood of sketches and stories with portraits of new men and accounts of their deeds and accomplishments. Gradually, the scope of the narrative began to expand and some works appeared which did full justice to the high-mindedness and spiritual richness of the new hero, his new world outlook, feelings and thoughts. The hero was shown against a broad background and was involved in major undertakings. There was no discrepancy in his perception of the world between the private and the common interests. A communist attitude towards work, a new awareness of duty, morality, and beauty were internalised by the new individual.

The 1930s saw many innovations in the portrayal of the working man which were later developed in Soviet literature. Chief of them is revealing the spiritual richness of the individual who displays his best qualities in the collective effort for renewal of life. Writers were pioneers hot on the trail of events, interpreting the new features of life.

Yuri Krymov's story *Tanker Derbent* was a milestone in Soviet literature. It reflected new phenomena of life and also showed that literature had made new aesthetic gains in its search for new means of typifying the new hero.

The story is based on real facts and tells how the crew of the tanker *Derbent* gradually became one of the best. The writer brings precision to describing their circumstances, the technicalities of their work, and the environment in which the idea of socialist emulation drive sprang up and a working crew turned from laggards into an advanced crew. The idea of Stakhanovite labour runs like a golden thread through the whole story.

In terms of composition Krymov's story is similar to a novel. It has clear plotlines connected with the main hero, Basov, the mechanic Gussein, political commissar Bredis, Captain's mate Kasatsky and Captain Kubasov. The writer

tries to show the dialectic of their feelings and thoughts revealed through their attitude to the main goals of life, which brings us to the innovations made by Yuri Krymov.

The scope of events in his story is relatively small. It tells episodes from the life of the crew of the *Derbent*. And the heroes, vivid individuals all of them, are not many (the positive heroes are Basov and Gussein, and the negative, Kasatsky and Kubasov). But the changes in the inner world of people carried away by a noble goal—taking part in new forms of labour—are so important that the concrete facts take on historical significance and are filled with poetry.

Why does the character of Basov, in spite of all the shortcomings of Yuri Krymov's descriptions of his feelings, appeal to us so much? It is because for the first time in Soviet literature there was a vivid description of a new individual brought up by socialism, an individual for whom working and thinking in a new way are as natural as breathing or eating. Yuri Krymov did not only reveal the human element of labour but showed in a specific fashion the beginnings of the great process which marked a new epoch, the epoch when man could freely display his abilities in the main sphere of life, i. e., labour.

Yuri Krymov shows that involvement in new forms of labour is a mass process. And that lends special impact to Yuri Krymov's story, making ordinary facts unusual. The participation of the crew in socialist emulation provides the focus of the narrative and propels the plot. It is the discovery of untapped potential in man. When they come up with a new suggestion to improve work, Gussein, the wheelman Karpushin and the navigator Alyavdin are transformed. And this is also true of Basov. Efficient labour is shown in Yuri Krymov's story as a school of communist education. That marks a new departure in terms of ideas and form.

Yuri Krymov paid tribute to the moral grandeur of the Soviet man which is manifested both in ordinary and in unusual situations. Such an approach to the notion of man's spiritual potential enabled Yuri Krymov to see his positive characters as real heroes. The rescue of a distressed vessel—the tanker *Uzbekistan*—by the crew of the *Derbent* is the climax of the story and the high point in depicting the moral greatness of his characters. It is like a battle in which the man who has passed through the school of communist education shows what he is capable of. The events are laden

with drama. Kasatsky takes advantage of Kubasov's weakness to do an evil thing: he orders to cut the rope and leaves the burning vessel, dooming to death its crew. Basov and Gussein, and the other members of the crew of the *Derbent* challenge Kasatsky. And Basov leads the men in the rescue mission.

It was rather characteristic of Soviet literature of the 1930s to approach the lofty morality of the working man, his generous nature, and the educational power of the collective in that way. Soviet literature was extending its frontiers and looking boldly into the future. Socialist construction permeated drama, poetry, and prose transforming all these genres and changing their form.

V

The new historical principles of Soviet literature were highlighted during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 when the borderline between art and reality seemed to have disappeared. Newspaper reports about battles at the front made as great an impact as stories and essays. Writers put on army uniforms and plunged into the thick of battle or worked on frontline newspapers. Many of them died in action (V.Stavsky, A.Gaidar, Y.Krymov). Heroic reality invaded all forms of art and overwhelmed the artist, giving him a new historical perspective, in spite of all the unusual, often tragic situations. During the Great Patriotic War Soviet literature demonstrated to the whole world its maturity and mobilising impact, and its social and aesthetic strength. Describing the heroic behaviour of ordinary people at the front, Soviet writers paid tribute to the high consciousness and sense of duty exhibited by Soviet people during the war. Works written at that time identified the sources of heroism and victories of Soviet people who, in defending the gains of the October Revolution in fierce battle with the enemy, simultaneously defended world civilisation and saved humanity from the threat of nazi slavery.

The themes of patriotism, heroism and defence of the gains of the October Revolution and world civilisation permeated Soviet literature and were present in all the genres of literature and the arts resulting in a new blend of

publicistic and imaginative writings. In describing the gallantry displayed by Soviet soldiers the author usually rose above the facts as such and brought into play the ideals of love of country and hatred of the nazi foe.

The personal and the social, the subjective and the objective in the work of Soviet artists merge into one to produce new works carrying great ideas and emotions.

Eternal themes of love, hatred, heroism, and death took on a new significance in Soviet literature in the light of the struggle between two worlds, a fierce armed conflict in which the destinies of the mankind were decided. During the war the fate of an individual was at the mercy of history and the course of history depended on the actions of the individual. Soviet literature showed the closest link between the destiny of an individual and the destiny of the world, and revealed the new principles of Soviet morality and a new concept of duty.

All the genres of literature—prose, poetry, publicistic writings, and drama—acquired new features in the grim years of the war. They became more openly committed and passionate, and gravitated towards the heroic character. The achievements of Soviet drama were especially notable.

The concrete historical analysis of tragic events in some of the best plays (*Russian People* by Simonov, *Invasion* by Leonov, and *Front* by Korneichuk) was combined with generalisation, with close-up pictures of characters who fought nazism to the last. We still remember Captain Safonov, the reconnaissance woman Valya, and the doctor's assistant Globa from *Russian People* by Simonov. And we are still moved by the dramatic life stories of Fyodor Talanov, his mother, and the underground resistance fighter Kolesnikov who behaved with unexampled courage (*Invasion* by Leonov). To this day we cannot be indifferent to the conflict between Gorlov and Ognev in Alexander Korneichuk's play *Front*. We see concrete individuals shown in the light of historical experience and of the great tasks which they must tackle every day and every minute. These dramas show history at its explosive moments which reveal the inner world of all the characters and their ability to fight for the communist ideals.

Soviet drama during the Great Patriotic War succeeded in identifying the main gain of socialism, i. e., the unheard-of

moral and political unity and mass heroism of Soviet people.

Alexander Korneichuk in his play raised topical questions. His central characters are two important army commanders, Front Commander Gorlov and Army Commander Ognev, people who are responsible for the conduct of the war. In the play, they are not just the mouthpieces of the author but flesh-and-blood people. They have their individual traits, their ideas of duty and responsibility, strategy and tactics in the war, and relations with people. The conflict between Ognev and Gorlov reflects deep processes and the characters become types (especially Gorlov), expressing trends of historical significance.

Korneichuk censures Gorlov by revealing the harm that is done by a commander who has not mastered the new tactics and strategy of war. And he shows the superiority of Ognev, a talented and courageous commander who is knowledgeable, and skilled in the conduct of a modern war. In artistic terms, however, Ognev comes out a less vivid character than Gorlov. Even so, the play is imbued with the atmosphere of the time. The clash between Ognev and Gorlov assumed larger significance as it had to do with moral as well as political and military questions.

The action in Korneichuk's play develops in such a way as to show that historical, military, and moral truth is on Ognev's side. Ognev is by no means alone in confronting Gorlov. He has the support of Kolos, a talented cavalry group commander and a veteran of the Civil War; and Gaidar, a member of the War Council. He also commands the sympathies of soldiers. To emphasise the situation Korneichuk sets Gorlov against his brother Miron, a talented engineer, manager of a large aircraft plant, and his own son, Lieutenant Sergei Gorlov who condemns his father for his inept commanding.

Many people are involved in the conflict between Ognev and Gorlov. It develops like a dramatic battle. And it shows that Gorlov is bound to lose that battle. The dramatist is to be credited with showing the objective strength of the new as embodied by Ognev. The situation, the events, the sympathies of people, and the requirements of the time—all this helps Ognev to reveal his talent and prowess as military commander. Korneichuk shows that typical situations, which express the historical trend of development, deter-

mine the victory of Ognev over Gorlov. The latter embodies the outdated and the moribund, something that is sure to be swept aside by the onslaught of the new.

Re-reading Korneichuk's play *Front* today one notes the author's attempt to show Ognev as a commander possessing features which are highly prized by his soldiers. Dramatically, the high points of the play are the mass scenes involving the Ukrainian Ostapenko, the Georgian Gomelauri, the Kazakh Shayametov and the Russian Bashlykov. These scenes sparkle with humour and give insight into the feelings of the soldiers, their comradeship, their enthusiasm, and heroism which comes naturally to them. It is a slice of history shown in a stage drama. That scene fits in with the dramatic situation and carries an important idea, i. e., the people's notions about heroism, duty, and the proper type of commander. Sergei Gorlov's soldiers are fond of their commander, and he in turn, is fond of Ognev. He believes in Ognev's talent and is ready to go into battle under his command. Most soldiers die in the battle. But in dying, they know that their death is not meaningless and that Ognev will lead the Soviet troops to victory in their operation to liberate the stronghold seized by the Germans. At the same time, Gorlov's inept orders consign to death entire military units (tank corps and the cover units). Thus the play brings together harsh truth and heroic realities and this enables the author to bring out an important idea, to show Gorlov in a starkly negative light and give a poetic portrait of Ognev who lives up to the popular image of what an advanced man and talented commander should be like.

Korneichuk's play was highly dramatic touching as it did on the sensitive questions of his time. Published in the *Pravda* newspaper and in army newspapers, it provoked a lively discussion not only in the press but at party meetings among soldiers. It is a striking example of art and life interacting during the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people and art helping the triumph of justice.

Soviet poetry too during the Great Patriotic War revealed historical concreteness and generalisation in a new form.

Along with romantic forms (the poems *Kirov Is With Us* by N. Tikhonov, *Son* by P. Antokolsky and *Zoya* by M. Ali-ger) there appeared a work which marked a new type of realistic poetry. I am referring to Alexander Tvardovsky's *Vassili Tyorkin*. History and poetry merge into one as

concreteness achieves a new level.

Everything in the poem is simple and true to life: soldiers have a rest, live in the trenches, talk about tanks and planes, fight battles and heal their wounds. The poet dispenses with plot and engages the reader in a rambling conversation interspersed with jokes and lyrical digressions and stories about tragic events. The poet proclaims his intention to describe the everyday side of war by talking about puttees, tobacco, steambaths, cooks, soup—in short, all the things without which one cannot imagine life at the front, where

*Faintly smells of frozen pine-twigs,
Boots, makhorka, human sweat...*¹

And then suddenly a miracle happens and real everyday facts and events become poetic and the conditions in which the soldiers live and fight acquire historical significance.

The poem is written by a man who has plumbed the depth of misfortune, has gone through the war, experienced the cold of the trenches, hid from strafing enemy planes, took part in charges against the enemy and shared with his comrades his last piece of bread and the last pinch of tobacco. The details of life at war are as authentic in *Vassili Tyorkin* as in Furmanov's *Chapayev* or in Pyotr Vershigora's story *People with a Clear Conscience*; Tvardovsky shows a modern war. Veterans of the last war to this day read Tvardovsky's poem with tears and a warm smile, repeating the poet's credo:

*It's poetry, but it's Russian,
Anyone can understand.*

The poetic appeal of simple unsophisticated narrative in Tvardovsky's poem stems from the fact that it portrays everyday life as heroic and conveys the people's ideas on the meaning of life and patriotic duty. Everything in the poem assumes historical significance and becomes unusual in its very ordinariness. It is a tribute to the simple Soviet man

¹ Here and after the extracts from *Vassili Tyorkin* are taken from A. Tvardovsky, *Vassili Tyorkin*, Progress Publishers, 1975, translated by Alex Miller.—Ed.

who in the time of severe trials displayed unheard-of fortitude, consciousness, and will for victory. His acts, feelings, behaviour, thoughts and cares, which were shown by Tvardovsky with such truthfulness, became a kind of legend to acquire a universal significance.

Towards, the end of his life, Turgenev confessed in a letter to Claudine Viardot (August 26, 1878): "In my work I am a realist and I ... prefer realism in art, poetic reality, i. e., reality so truthful as to become beautiful."¹

These words of Turgenev can well be applied to Tvardovsky's poem *Vassili Tyorkin*. Tvardovsky's skill of investing everyday life with poetry and universal meaning is amazing. One stands in awe of the moral grandeur as the poet turns simple words and simple facts and events into images of great meaning.

Let us recall the chapter which tells about an officer who retreats in the face of the enemy and who visits his family which is soon to find itself "under the Germans". Everything in that chapter is simple, ordinary and exact piece of life. At the same time everything is poetic and lofty, like in an ancient tragedy speaking about national disasters and the destiny of an individual in the years of dreadful trials. Through simple details (how the wife met her husband, gave a meal to the soldiers, how the husband, wishing to help his wife and not knowing how to help her, spends the whole night silently cutting firewood: "Chop, chop, chopping until sunrise... Yes, he loves his wife more dearly"). Tvardovsky shows the feelings that bring Soviet people together. The chapter says nothing about German atrocities, the ashes of war or the German air raids on peaceful villages. The native village has been spared all that. But the lyrical tone of the narrative is lofty and tragic. Everything in it conveys the calamity of war. And that is seen poignantly at the climax of the story when the commander has to say good-bye to his family. The poet makes no attempt to dramatise his simple description of the children waking up before dawn, seeing their father and the soldiers and becoming alarmed and *growing up*. Nothing is said about the father's feelings. But the poet looks at the children with the father's eyes. And that enables us to read between the lines. Juxtaposition

¹ "Unknown Letters of Turgenev". From the archives of the Viardot family. *Inostrannaya Literatura*, 1971, No 1, p. 202.

of significant facts gives psychological insights. When the time comes for the father to go and leave his family at the mercy of fate, the drama reaches a high pitch:

*And the children started crying,
And you saw in your mind's eye
German soldiers armed with rifles
Bursting in there suddenly...*

And that crying, like a tragic note, lends poignancy to the situation and expresses the great sorrow that the war visited on the people. Throughout the war that crying rings in Tyorkin's ears like a call for vengeance:

*And that sound of children crying
Calls to me from far away,
From the wrong side of the river
Even to this very day.*

In this way Tvardovsky reveals the humane nature of the Great Patriotic War. No wonder the recurring refrain in his poem expresses the people's idea of the war:

*For mere fame and glory – never,
But for life on earth forever
Fight the just and holy fight!*

The poet does not avoid the tragic sides of war. He speaks about them in an austere and straightforward language without a trace of falsehood, with stark truth. At the same time, truth does not humiliate but exalts those who die in war. Think, for example, of the chapter called "Crossing Over". It is an epic picture of a night-time battle, a tragic battle in which boys with "close-cropped hair" are caught in murderous fire of the German guns and die. Only one platoon managed to cross and gain a foothold on the other bank.

The verse in that chapter rings and resounds. It is filled with courage, determination, it breathes history. Along with painting a realistic picture of the crossing, the poet praises, in inspired yet simple words, the courage and strength of the young heroes to whom it fell to carry on the cause of their fathers:

*Yet they're going into battle,
Though mere boys and nothing more,
Like their fathers and their comrades.
Way back in the Civil War.*

*Their's the road down which the Russian
Soldier-toiler had to go,
Flintlock musket on his shoulder,
Some two hundred years ago.*

*Past the unkempt, tousled temples,
Past the boyish eyes so bright,
Death in battle whistled often—
Will it spare them all tonight?*

For the poet these boys with "close-cropped hair" are near and dear because he knows the heroic feat they are performing:

*And the faces, so familiar,
Suddenly seem different
For the lads now standing near you
Aren't the ones you used to know;
Each is closer, each is clearer,
Each is graver, starker, dearer
Than he was an hour ago.*

All the more bitter and tragic the poem sounds when it speaks about the death of these boys with full knowledge of the irreparable tragedy and at the same time with full understanding of the great feat they have performed in the battle by fulfilling their duty to the last. The poet avoids any digressions here. Like a chronicler of old, he gives an account of facts. And yet the picture as a whole acquires great meaning. Humanism becomes stronger from the stern historical truth. Poetry breathes the air of the tragic events and shifts in intonation to convey the poet's shaken feelings.

*Blood that night ran in the river
And was carried down to sea.
Sudden through the pitch-black darkness
Blazed a searchlight's spreading beam,
Stabbing with a quivering finger
Slantwise down across the stream.*

*Then a shell! The water fountained.
Pontoons jammed. No room to spare.
Very tightly packed together
Were the lads with close-cropped hair...*

*How could anyone forget it,
Seeing helpless soldiers drown—
Live warm-blooded human beings
Sinking down, and down, and down...*

The poet never wanders from the truth. He knows that without truth man's moral stature, his ideals cannot be depicted. This is the principle which he proclaims:

*But you just can't go on living
Without one thing most of all.
What is that? The truth, arriving
Harsh, relentless, undeceiving,
Soulwards mercilessly driving,
Bitter though it be as gall.*

Truthfulness is what lends a historical and poetic quality to the poem. It is manifested both in the description of the atmosphere and the harsh conditions of the war and in the portrayal of the Soviet man who performs a heroic feat because he is conscious of his patriotic duty. These two elements combine to determine the unique tone of Tvardovsky's poem and his unusual realistic palette.

Tvardovsky's poem largely succeeds in meeting one of the main challenges of Soviet literature—to show the people at war and give poetic tribute to the moral grandeur of the people. This lends an epic quality to the poem. Whatever the poet writes about, he never forgets about the raging war:

*But war's like the sea waves pounding
At the dike with booming roar.*

At the same time behind the simple real facts one is aware of the might of the people who are able to stand up in the face of the dreadful storm of war and not only to stand up to it but to overcome it. And the character of the enlisted man, Vassili Tyorkin, comes across as a "son of the people's family" ("better and worse men than I am may

have lost their lives in war"). That character marks Tvardovsky's success in meeting another major challenge of Soviet literature, and that is in portraying a man of the people. Vassili Tyorkin is so ordinary and yet so vividly individual that he has entered popular consciousness as a living person (along with such types as Chapayev, Korcha-gin, Oleg Koshevoy, Meresyev, and Mussa Jalil).

When *Vassili Tyorkin* was published it came in for some criticism for its hero being too "down-to-earth" and being portrayed without "pathos". But in time it became clear that Tvardovsky in his portrayal of Tyorkin revealed natural heroism which stems from moral strength coming from consciousness and which fills an inner need of men. And that in itself was proof that socialism had won the minds of men who had thereby become morally and spiritually superior.

Tvardovsky tells the story of Tyorkin with lyricism but it is lyricism with a difference. It has an epic quality. All the minutiae of the wartime are there. The poem expresses the deepest feelings of the nation and so can be described as heroic and historical. Thus, the ballad of a "brooklet of spring waters" near Smolensk is more than a lyrical digression. It is a kind of lyrical poem about motherland and its suffering mothers whom war has separated from their sons, who weep and yearn for them, not knowing what has become of them. And the chapter about the soldier ("bothered by a double wound, badly knocked about and battered") is also permeated with a lyrical feeling. It is interrupted—after an account of great victories ("Over what great city, Russia, shall your flag triumphant soar! ")—by a tragic scene. A soldier weeps tearfully when he learns that the war has destroyed his family and he is now alone in the world. A concrete fact is not merely a reflection of the general; it bears the impress of typicality. It carries a great ethical message, condemning nazism and its inhuman nature with harrowing impact. The reader is exposed to great human sorrow and great humanity.

Only a poet who himself has lived through the hardship of war could have such an insight into the soldier's heart and could have described his feelings so naturally. The poet's destiny is inseparable from the destiny of the people. That unity accounts for the epic element in the poem. The heroism of the people is shown in all its magnitude as a

natural result of moral greatness. The poem has none of the elevated rhetoric that marks monumental genre. But it conveys a sense of history through the stories of the characters, as is typical of epic poems. The whole second part of *Vassili Tyorkin* speaks about the victory of the people over the enemy and the liberatory mission of the Soviet Army. It is washed in radiant light. Lyrical and epic qualities blend here to produce a new phenomenon both in Soviet and world poetry.

VI

As the horizons of the Soviet writers broaden so does their grasp of reality. The writers are able to trace social development over longer stretches of time, to compare events and conflicts, to throw light on the changes in life and people. That, of course, makes writing more analytical.

However, analysis cannot exist without synthesis (and we shall take up that subject elsewhere in the book). Greater concern for history is accompanied, in contemporary literature, by a search for new forms of generalisation and artistic synthesis. There is growing unity between analysis and synthesis.

Description of events and trends and the tracing of characters over protracted periods make even heavier demands on the writers' ability to single out the main thing. The writer cannot cover everything. He must select the most important and characteristic things which highlight essential sides of a phenomenon. At the same time, these phenomena must be shown in all their historical uniqueness, with due account for the interconnection of phenomena and the general perspective of social development. Inevitably, culmination points appear in the composition in which all the lines converge. A fact treated historically assumes great significance intellectually and aesthetically, concentrating the particular, the characteristic, and the universally relevant.

Take, for example, Leonov's *The Russian Forest*. It is a philosophical work which spans the period from the end of the 19th century until the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). Its chapters are arranged in a complex pattern and speak about the present and the past. The novel is peopled by many characters. At the same time it has about it a whole-

ness, harmony and completeness in the portrayal of events and characters.

The writer achieves remarkable concreteness in the narrative and portraiture. He describes with the precision of a professional the scientific arguments about forestry. He evokes the past and present in such scrupulous detail and with such authenticity that one can only marvel at the author's thorough knowledge of life. Leonov is in love with Oblog, the birthplace of the main character, Vikhrov. He admires Vikhrov's introductory lecture on forestry and includes the full text in his novel. But that does not detract from the artistic merits of the novel. On the contrary, it is evidence of its new epic quality.

Leonov's style is marked by a special selectivity, concentration on expressive events, situations, and conflicts which flash out essential phenomena that are often unnoticed at first sight. One can identify culmination points in the composition of the novel. Leonov describes these events with thoroughness and investigates them with minute precision, like a scientist. Not a single detail escapes his notice. At the same time one is aware that these events mark milestones in the life of the people, in the life of the country and the characters.

With Leonov, a concrete fact is a bud which conceals all the petals of life. The writer describes the enormous mechanisms that are set in motion in the universe in order that hidden forces come to life in a single bud. This approach determines the intensity of description of facts and the epic aspects of Leonov's novel. Every picture and character are taken not in isolation but in their association with history, gathering in characteristic phenomena.

The writer turns the spotlight on the key event in the narrative. We see Oblog and Pashutino, and the pre-revolutionary life of the peasants, with a landowner, a predatory merchant, Knyshev, who cuts down the Oblog forest, and the kulak Zolotukhin, who envies Knyshev. Leonov draws vivid peasant types—Matvei, Vikhrov's father, a champion of the people's truth; old man Kalina, "the wood spirit" who guards the gifts of nature. Everything is portrayed with vividness and historical precision. The pictures, images and situations fit into the historical pattern and so acquire a general meaning to give a picture of the past riddled with social contradictions.

One should mention the description in the novel of the student years of Vikhrov and Gratsiansky in the 1910s, which is so truthful as to claim a place in a historical manual. There is very accurate description of the revolutionary movement of the time, in which Krainov and Vikhrov are involved, with the rambling arguments of students and confrontations. The self-analysis of Gratsiansky, his morbid egoism and his desire to distinguish himself by any means, even by organising a pseudo-revolutionary group called "Young Russia", his betrayal of his friends, and his shady dealings with police are drawn with such insight into the vile, sticky world of a bourgeois individualist and with such precise period detail that these chapters of *The Russian Forest* stand comparison with pictures drawn by Gorky in *The Life of Klim Samgin*. Indeed, Gratsiansky is akin to Klim Samgin, both representing the psychological type of the bourgeois individualist.

When the writer comes to the war period he also displays intimate knowledge of the situation in describing wartime Moscow, which bravely beats off air raids, the moral unity of the Soviet people, and the readiness of the Soviet young men and women to die for their country. The heroic deed of Polya Vikhrova who has passed through the inferno of war and withstood baptism by fire, her friendship with her father, confrontation with Gratsiansky and irrepressible faith in the power of good—all this carries a special message.

Leonov's skill in revealing the interconnection of the usual and the unusual, of the concrete and the general, is remarkable. He follows his principle penetrating into the innermost recesses of the characters' feelings, tracing how certain qualities of a character evolve and are manifested in certain situations.

As a rule, Leonov graphically describes the sharp situations and conflicts in which the characters are fully revealed. Such situations show the qualities that had been accumulated and tests of the characters' latent potential. The clashes between the characters are dramatic. Complex lives, each characteristic in its own way, crisscross in the novel. They are engaged in a life and death battle. No one is able to or wants to budge an inch from their position, and everyone fights for his ideas and life's goals to the end.

Leonov describes with particular thoroughness the turning points in the life of the hero, concentrating attention on the

events and conflicts which cause upheavals in his mind. In such cases there is a particular harmony in the description of characters and circumstances. The thing is that the hero's thoughts, feelings, and acts as manifested at crucial moments are always historically and socially predetermined, thus highlighting the characteristic features of a given class or a given intellectual or social phenomenon. The situations are full of seething passions, clashes of wills and ideals. We see the social experience and the subjective motives of the hero in a concentrated form. Everything is shown in its evolution. Reading Leonov's novel we cannot help feeling the pulse of time and we can identify ourselves with the sentiments and notions of the characters who express historical truth.

Gorky described such a method as hypothetical. The types and situations in Leonov's novel acquire universal relevance while being socially determinate.

Thus Leonov achieves special expressiveness and authenticity of characters and situations. The time, the lives of men, the past, present and future (in projection) are shown in their characteristic features to form a coherent picture. The writer is careful to dot every i.

Probing deep into the depraved soul of Gratsiansky he condemns him as a type which embodies all the hideous features of the old moribund mentality which still tenaciously clings to life. Such mentality may still poison the Soviet people.

Leonov's sympathies are unreservedly on the side of Ivan Vikhrov and the Soviet youth. The character of Vikhrov and of the YCL members in his novel (Polya, Sergei, Rodion, and Varya) express the writer's idea of the new man. With the passion of an artist and the dedication of a scientist Leonov traces how the new type of man is formed and asserts himself. In fact, what propels Leonov's novel and its plot is the battle for the new man as the new wonder of the world. Leonov attributes high morality to the people, and to the Revolution, and links them with the victory of new social relations and the triumph of the new truth on earth. Bright upbeat notes prevail in his novel. This is particularly true of the way Soviet youth is depicted. The cheerful and bright tones then acquire a particular expressiveness. We admire the pure feelings, aspirations, and ideals of the Soviet youth. Confrontation between the two worlds

embodied in complex psychological portraits takes on great poignancy: all the dark, predatory, and vicious things in life retreat and perish in the bright light of the new world which heralds the triumph of everything that is genuinely humane and lofty.

Thus concrete historical method and social definiteness lend great philosophical meaning to Leonov's novel *The Russian Forest*.

One finds a new sense of history also in the second part of Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*.

One must bear in mind that the first part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* was written in 1932, immediately after the events described in it. The second part of it was written 30 years later. Naturally, Sholokhov was able to see events within the framework of history. "The distance of time" enabled the writer to see more clearly the significance of the changes which took place in rural life as a result of socialist transformations, and to concentrate attention on the key events in collective farm history.

Sholokhov has managed to overcome what is sometimes called "the paradox of time". The reader does not notice the distance between the time when the work was written and the events described in it. The narrative is so arranged that the reader is transposed to the 1930s, lives in the atmosphere of those years, and feels as if he were taking part in the events of the first year of a newly-organised collective farm on the Don River. Sholokhov recreates the atmosphere of the collective farm of those years with amazing accuracy. Nowhere does he depart from historical truth and he never errs by "modernising" events or by having his characters say things which they could not have said in the 1930s but might well have said in the 1960s, when the book was written. And yet the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* is consonant, in its ideas and feelings of the positive heroes, not only with the 1930s but also with our own time.

How is that achieved? There is no gap between the first and second parts of the novel as far as the narrative, structure and ideological thrust are concerned. They are organically linked together and complement each other. In the first part of the novel we see the start of collectivisation and the changes that occur in Gremyachi Log when the collective farm is set up. In the second part of the novel

we see the life of the collective farm when it looks for new forms of economic management and has to tackle a host of problems in the context of new relations among collective farmers. The theme of the growing consciousness of peasants who have embarked on new life is already powerfully heard in the first part of the novel. In that part we see class struggle intensifying and the collective farm being organised as a new form of farming to replace private farming. In the second part of the novel Sholokhov shows how the mentality of men is changed as a result of the victory of collectivisation. He depicts that process as universal among the working masses, beginning from a rank-and-file collective farmer and ending with managers. And this is what lends contemporary relevance to Sholokhov's novel.

We see the writer's matured skill. He describes events in a free and sweeping manner.

Scholars outside the Soviet Union have noted some external features of the *nouveau roman* in the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned*: "free composition", attention to the subconscious, great detailing, etc. "Flashbacks to the past," says the French critic Jean Cathala, "are sometimes like whole stories 'on the margin', for example, the story of Arzhanov. The author 'forgets', as it were, to stop his talkative characters, Shaly and old man Shchukar. Some auxiliary episodes get far more space than key events. Nagulnov's antics occupy many more pages than his death... Such 'violations' of the canons of composition are deliberate: they impart greater tension to dramatic events or, more often, help to show man in life, to look deeper into his heart and recreate reality in the most graphic and tangible way."

One must say, however, that the structure of Sholokhov's novel is geared to a very different task than those pursued by the writers of *nouveau roman*. Sholokhov does not seek to show the patchy conscience of his characters or the chaos of impressions or the power of the subconscious. He is concerned with revealing the processes in the new way of life, with tracing the dialectics of the characters' feelings and thoughts as they take part in the building of socialism.

What is new about *Virgin Soil Upturned* is its profundity, humanity, and the romanticism with which feelings and thoughts are portrayed, and the beauty and richness of the mental world of people, simple toilers, who have entered a

new world of social relations. Sholokhov demonstrates that socialism insures conditions in which the intellectual and moral qualities of the people can be fully revealed and indeed perfected and developed thanks to the far-going changes taking place in rural life. The characters of Shaly, Arzhanov, Nagulnov, Varenka Kharlamova, and, for that matter, of old man Shchukar, powerfully affect the reader not only because each has individuality but mainly because at crucial moments of their life when all their intellectual and moral reserves are stretched to the limit, they display "their hearts of gold" and behave in such a humane and noble way as can only be done by the best people on earth. For all that each behaves in accordance with his own nature (for example, the attachment of Shchukar to Nagulnov and Davydov). Socialism and the pure morality inherent in the people, lofty ideas of humanity and the building of new life merge in the description of heroes to form a world of new feelings and thoughts and to convey the special poetry that marks the life of people in the socialist community.

It is not by chance that communists figure prominently in Sholokhov's novel. They are paragons of the best human qualities and vehicles of the people's wisdom. Regional Party Secretary Nesterenko feels at home in the field among farmers, his tongue is always at the ready, he is cheerful and gregarious and at the same time can influence the masses and the Party members. Sholokhov in the second part of the novel enlarges and deepens the intellectual world of Davydov, adding new traits and making Davydov think deeper and feel more strongly about the consequences of his acts. The positions of the characters in the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* are seen in a new ideological light. Sholokhov shows the new pattern of relations between Davydov and the farmers at Gremyachi Log, which emerges after collectivisation when new social forms of conscience are rapidly spreading. Davydov comes to identify himself with the masses. And that marks a turning point in his relations with the farmers, a new stage in his spiritual growth. Being in daily contact with people, he can observe many remarkable characters among the grassroots. Two strands of the narrative blend, mutually enriching each other. Sholokhov shows how the people change and develop and how Davydov, too, changes and develops. The people's best qualities are revealed when they embrace socialism.

And for his part Davydov, by merging with the masses, does not forfeit his individuality, on the contrary, he acquires new traits. The Gremyachi Log people come to trust Davydov, elect him their chairman, seek his council, and lay bare their hearts to him. Davydov reciprocates by being attentive to the needs of the people of Gremyachi Log. He does not only lead and teach the masses but he learns from the masses, soaking in the wisdom of the people and deciding together with them how to go on building a new life. So, in a concrete form, Sholokhov shows relations between the communists and the members of the collective farm to trace the emergence of a new pattern of relations among men under socialism.

Everything in Sholokhov's novel is authentic. At the same time the real situations reveal to us the large spiritual world of people and we are presented with pictures of great ideological import. The historical concreteness and generalisation are so blended in Sholokhov's novel and are manifested in such an original way that the reader does not notice how the characters of ordinary people become artistic types, epic figures carrying a great historical message. In narrative power the novel is in many ways a new kind of epic.

That was less noticeable in the first part of *Virgin Soil Upturned*. That part struck one as being topical. The events then had an immediate impact on the reader. Not so in the second part of the novel. From the vantage point of time, the events of the 1930s can be seen in historical perspective and one is aware of the depth with which these events are portrayed in Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Collectivisation appears as a turning point in the life of the people. Just like *Quiet Flows the Don* showed the destiny of the people during the Civil War so *Virgin Soil Upturned* shows its destiny during the collectivisation. The profound historical and psychological truth in describing collectivisation and the changes it brought to the popular consciousness enables the writer to convey the heroism of labour and show the vistas which open up before the people who have embarked on a new life.

Epic scope has been characteristic of contemporary Soviet literature. It is manifested differently in different genres. But it is determined above all by the depth of the author's thought and his ability to see fundamental change

behind concrete facts.

Of prime importance is the portrayal of the characters' rich inner world and broad intellectual horizons. Our literature probes ever deeper into the inner world of the new man and through its prism tries to show the changes taking place in the world. And that produces, in modern literature, various forms of epic generalisation of the concrete, which is true of large and small genres. The writers actively look for new forms of typification.

A. Ivanov's novel *Eternal Call* reveals a new and deeper historical approach and tries to show the highlights of the struggle for socialism with stark truth.

The life of the Siberian village of Shantary in the first year of the Second World War is seen as part of history, beginning from the First Russian Revolution of 1905 and ending with the construction of socialism. Just like in his novels *Povitel* and the *Shadows Vanish at Noon*, the writer displays prowess at painting raw and original characters and outlining the movement of history through them. The central preoccupations in the novel are moral. But they are intimately linked with social and class relations and are invested with social meaning along with the description of the characters' psychology and ideals.

The strong side of the novel is the way it shows the influence of the past on the mentality of men. The author punctuates his story of the present by look-backs into the past to show the outdated attitudes defeated during the October Revolution surviving and gnawing at the minds of people like maggots and urge the need to tirelessly combat them. Yet at times the influence of the past is exaggerated, as in the character of Fyodor Saveliev, a former partisan and respected harvester combine operator who after thirty years of Soviet rule is still, at bottom, a man of property, an alien in his family and his community.

Ivanov's novel is psychological. Describing the events through the perception of the characters the writer is able to give the narrative a certain tone and convey to it a certain feeling (grim when speaking about Fyodor Saveliev and bright and cheerful when describing the mood of Semyon Saveliev and Natasha Mironova when mutual rapport develops between them and they fall in love with each other).

In depicting sharp clashes and dramatic class conflicts,

the writer exposes his characters to trials and shows the turmoil in their hearts and the drastic changes in their attitudes. That makes it possible to depict the events and life stories in their evolution. The writer's sympathies are on the side of those who display grit, can stand up to adversity, and challenge circumstances and triumph. The positive heroes are at the focus of Ivanov's novel. Austere realism in depicting the difficulties and fierce class struggles, and the resistance of the enemy is justified and helps the writer to dramatise the strength of the positive heroes, their will-power, courage, and dedication in the struggle for lofty ideals.

There are examples galore in Ivanov's novel to prove that idea. The writer shows graphically the sterling moral qualities his heroes display when they boldly face dangers and difficulties and uphold their cause with confidence and faith. Ivanov believes that these moral qualities are the hallmarks of the people's character and traces how they are manifested at different stages of social development: during the First Russian Revolution when their strength, self-control, and courage were needed to oppose the tsarist gendarmes; during the Civil War when they had to fight against superior forces of the White Guards; during the Great Patriotic War when they had to assemble a new munitions factory in two weeks, building from scratch, and send artillery shells to the front.

The characters of the people in Ivanov's novel range from the prominent Party worker and economic manager Anton Saveliev and Secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Subbotin, to the common village lad, Semyon Saveliev, from the district Party Secretary Kruzhilin to a harassed woman, Anna Savelieva; from the wise and dignified collective farm manager Nazarov to the taciturn tractor driver, Inyutin. All these people have one common quality, and that is dedication. When things become difficult and when the common cause hangs in the balance the hidden potential of the people's character manifests itself.

Anton Saveliev, a battle-tried revolutionary who has experienced torture and was engaged in fierce class battles, gives his life to prevent an accident and save the factory from being demolished by a threatened explosion of a dynamite store. There is something of a great epic about the scenes which show how the workers respond to the heroic

death of the plant manager, Anton Saveliev. The simple words which the regional Party Secretary Subbotin says at the funeral of Anton Saveliev ("You, Anton Silantievich, knew what you lived for... You lived to help others live"...) suddenly acquire great meaning expressing the humane significance of the communists' struggle for the happiness of others.

History in A. Ivanov's novel is not just a description of events. It is artistically treated and is embodied in the lives of the characters. Each lives, feels, thinks, acts and speaks in a different way. And their paths diverge widely over the long span of time. During this period the life of everyone in the novel, including the three central characters, the Saveliev brothers, changes beyond recognition. History has passed through their hearts and minds and transformed their inner life. The reader is presented with a panorama of the life of the people drawn in austere colours and with love for those who did not spare themselves in fighting for a happy future.

Ivanov's novel, *Eternal Call*, is, regrettably, of uneven quality. Taken as a whole, it falls short of an epic although some scenes are laden with drama and are very powerful. This is due to many reasons, one of them being that *Eternal Call* is only the first part of a large canvass conceived by the author. Even so, along with the merits, one finds in it a shortcoming which prevents it from attaining the stature of an epic. The novel at times lacks philosophical depth. The sharp conflicts of the time are sometimes explained in rather abstract terms. Thus, at a very tense moment in the narrative when violations of legality come to light the author offers this explanation through the words of his positive hero: "We people, are no longer beasts because in our acts we are guided not by instincts alone, but we are not yet people because in our acts we are not guided only by the voice of reason..." The idea of the novel is that men must see the true essence of life in themselves. "...Luckily, man has been endowed with reason ... And sooner or later he comes to ponder the essence and meaning of existence, of the life of the people around him and of society, and his own acts and deeds. He is driven to do that by the powerful and eternal call to life, the eternal need to find one's place among fellow-humans." While correct in general ethical terms, that philosophy offers nothing new or original. As

applied by the writer to the facts of acute class and social struggles (for example, in the 1930s) it fails to explain man's behaviour and his moral and social notions in their historical perspective. That makes an imprint on the events and characters and narrows the impact of the novel which is full of historical flashbacks.

Sometimes the author falls into naturalism by emphasizing biological instincts and hereditary traits by which he tends to motivate the actions of his heroes. Man appears above all as a biological animal.

In all kinds of genres of contemporary Soviet literature the deepening historical approach is accompanied by the search for new expressive means. That process is not smooth and is manifested differently in different genres.

Probing into reality and truthful depiction of life, the struggle between the positive and the negative, which furiously fights for survival, have produced an entirely new trend in prose whose hallmarks are powerful characters, sharp conflicts and contrasts.

Epic genres are transformed and new methods are pioneered in an attempt to plumb the depths of the people's life. Contemporary prose is definitely bent on enhancing the ideological and aesthetic impact. Some major works have appeared, including the epic novels *The Windward Shore* by A. Hint, *Land and People* by R. Sirge, trilogies and chronicles in which the destiny of the people and the destinies of its heroes are milestoned by the key events of this country's history (from the October Revolution to our day). These works vary in style and artistic merit. But they all share a pronounced epic quality.

Soviet writers seek to penetrate into the complexities of their time and at the same time to express their attitude towards them. That prompted greater emphasis on lyricism in the Soviet prose and resulted in a series of works in which lyricism is the dominant feature of style.

Soviet poetry is also in the midst of rapid growth. It finds that the conventional genres don't give it enough room. Lyrical poems are invested with epic meaning. And new features mark lyrical poetry proper. An example in point is Yaroslav Smelyakov's poetic cycle called *Russia's Day*. Finest shades of feeling, deep emotions expressed in limpid Russian verse acquire universal relevance and provide a vehicle for important ideas. The poet invariably speaks

about concrete facts—relics of the past, his friends, a visit to the Kremlin, the lifestory of a farm woman, a meeting with the Spanish Communist Marcos Ana, the first commanders of the Red Army. But facts are not there for their own sake, they are seen in the light of historical experience and are warmed by the poet's feeling.

For Yaroslav Smelyakov, a fact, like a word, distills history. That is why his poems give a second lease on poetic life to concrete events of history. The poet identifies himself with the world's past and present. The destiny of a woman labourer who challenges the cruel mores of the life ruled by private property is his own destiny. The Red Army commanders who gave their lives for the Revolution are his kinsfolk and his brothers. And Yaroslav Smelyakov writes about the death of the great patriot of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, in a way that makes you feel that it is a misfortune for Africa and a personal loss for the Russian poet.

All the recent poems of Yaroslav Smelyakov are marked by this profound empathy and identification with the great causes and the history of the people. The poet feels to be part of history. Each new triumph of communism throws new light on the past and the future. The historical experience of the people and of the poet merge to lend a new tone to his poetry. In his confessional poem Yaroslav Smelyakov wrote:

*The sense of history
Has become sharper.
It has washed and scorched me
With its darkness and light.
Its signs are clearer,
Its thoughts and deeds are better understood.*

Identification with history is increasingly a feature of Soviet poetry. This is true of many poets and their poetic cycles. When they turn to the past or speak about the present the poets are not attracted to the dust and ashes of the past, they are attracted by the "lightning of centuries", the great deeds of the people, its wisdom. The march of history, as portrayed by contemporary writers, is marked by their individual perception of the world, the lyrical heroes'

powerful passions and thoughts.

History invades poetry to become modernity and helps to express the throbbing heart of the people, their pride of the past and confidence of a happy future. The poet's personal aspirations blend with those of his people and inspire his verse. This was vividly expressed by Justinas Marcinkevičius in his article "I'll Kiss the Earth". He created a cycle of dramatic poems which are marked by a philosophical grasp of history:

"The people's perception of the world is a constant source of strength for me and nourishment for my feelings with the help of which I become emotionally aware of myself as part of a certain whole, as part of a community and participant in the historical process."

The heroic past and heroic present of the Soviet people blend in the consciousness of Soviet poets. The poet is aware of the onward march of history and the creative nature of our time. Reflecting about the history of Red Square in Moscow, Yaroslav Smelyakov gives this poetic expression to the characteristic feature of our time:

*The air is still charged
With the electricity of Lenin's words.*

The poem of Platon Voronko entitled *The Knife, the Truth, and the Word* tells about the heroism of the partisans in the Carpathians who in the grimmest days of German occupation carry on a life and death struggle against the enemy.

The metaphoric structure of the poem, references to folklore legends about the folk hero Baida, historical parallels between the heroic present and the heroic past (a principle widely used in modern poetry) lends epic scope to Platon Voronko's poem. At the same time the poem is profoundly personal. All the events are seen through the perception of the poet who himself took part in the events and through all the hardships and tragedy of the partisan struggle preserved faith in the Soviet man and his happy future. For example, the heroic behaviour of Doctor Gritsko who gave his life to save wounded partisans inspires a poem glorifying human reason.

A sense of unity with the people and their heroic deeds accounts for many new phenomena in contemporary Soviet literature and, most important, it stimulates the creative efforts of writers in trying to do justice to the powerful movement of our society to the shining summits of communism. Following in the wake of life, art looks for (and finds) new means to represent poetically the heroic deeds of the Soviet people, new means for revealing historical truth.

THE TRUTH OF PEOPLE'S HEROISM

I

The question of artistic truth is nowhere more relevant than in discussing writings about the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.

Today we witness the third stage in the artistic interpretation of the war. Interest in the war theme shows no signs of waning. On the contrary, the further the Great Patriotic War recedes into the past the more we are aware of the magnitude of the feat of the Soviet people in the struggle against fascism and the keener the interest of the readers and artists in that period.

Contemporary Soviet writers who take up the theme of the Great Patriotic War are in some ways better placed than those who wrote about the war immediately after the events. "The distance of time" enables them to look deeper and from many sides at the events of the past and they know something that contemporaries of the war did not know and could not know. The present-day writer's ideas of the war are enriched by the subsequent course of history. From the vantage point of the present he can survey the whole historical process, can handle facts, documents, and eyewitness accounts with greater freedom. That allows writers freer choice of subjects, angle, and narrative structure and composition. "The distance of time" expands the writer's field of vision offering him greater room for comparing concrete facts with the general perspective and focussing attention on those sides of events which were obscured from the contemporaries.

However, remoteness from the events, "the distance of time" does not only help understand the past, but also places higher demands on the writer.

The very concept of historical approach as applied to the

events of the Great Patriotic War needs to be treated in a special way. The further we are from the Great Patriotic War the more we are aware of its historical significance and role in social development. Both the past and the future are thrown in bolder relief. A new dialectic relationship emerges between the present and the Great Patriotic War. That dialectic explains the new perception of concrete facts and the events of the war and lends a new character to historical method and artistic generalisation.

The link between the concrete and the general in the portrayal of the Great Patriotic War becomes more important. A concrete fact cannot be considered in isolation from its historical causes, or from the consequences which it brought. In other words, the link between the concrete and the general, which strengthened so dramatically during the Great Patriotic War, is even more significant in the works about the war written today. That link must be considered in historical perspective. This determines many trends in art, including the search for new forms of typification, which gravitate towards the epic genre.

Soviet literature already revealed a trend towards the epic genre during the war. It was prompted by the nature of events. The writers were eyewitnesses and, most of them, participants in events of unprecedented scope. They saw the mass heroism and spiritual might of the Soviet people.

Looking at Soviet literature of that time we see that the artists' work then was marked by large scope in portraying events and heroic deeds. That does not mean that the concept of the concrete and the particular disappeared from art. It merely acquired a new meaning.

All the personal experiences, decisions, and actions of the Soviet people and of literary characters were blended, fused with the war. And these personal experiences acquired a new definiteness and scope. The features of the character were described in close conjunction with the historical events which were taking place at the front and in the rear during the Great Patriotic War. Historical principles came to be decisive in assessing events and people's behaviour. Realism acquired greater scope, concrete facts were in definite relationship to history and were invested with far-reaching implications. There were powerful characters caught up in dramatic situations. The destiny of the world hang in the balance and in these conditions there were

greater demands on the artist who was required to see more clearly the larger reality that stood behind every concrete fact. Art renewed its methods. Colours were applied in powerful strokes, revealing the contrasts of events, the tragic situation and the fortitude of the Soviet man who heroically stood up to danger. The particular lost its particular character, as it were, and the concrete acquired individual features, standing in bold relief against the background of historic events. That was the hallmark of the time.

In developing new methods of typification, the depth of the writers' thoughts, correct assessment of events and human behaviour in historical perspective were exceedingly important. In describing the behaviour of the people, the emphasis was made on conscious heroism, on the moral greatness of the Soviet man displayed in the most difficult conditions. During the war important achievements were made in depicting the rank-and-file soldier, an ordinary Soviet man who revealed his extraordinary spiritual qualities. The writers realised what their main aesthetic task was, for it was impossible to reveal the mass heroism and give an idea of the Great Patriotic War as a people's war without glorifying the soldier.

The war also saw the beginnings of the tradition of showing the hardship of war truthfully and of deeply penetrating into the dialectic of events. The writers were aware of the aim of such an approach: without depicting the difficulties and the tragedy of war it was impossible to do full justice to the heroism of Soviet people. Soviet writers focussed on the key conflicts of their time. Their position was clear and definite. In describing these events, including the tragic situations, they proceeded from the basic social conflicts. They did not confine themselves to describing one side of things although each of them knew and felt the enormous price that was being paid for victory. Fierce fighting was going on at the front. The enemy moved as far as Moscow and Leningrad regions, Rostov-on-Don and eventually Stalingrad. But the writers, like all the Soviet people, believed in ultimate victory over nazism. That is why their portrayal of the difficulties and tragic sides of war always had about it an aura of heroism, and produced a special emotionalism and lyricism in the narrative.

Even the writing on the specific aspects of the war (combat strategy and growing military skill) just like the descriptions of the heroes who fought in different arms of the service was not confined to a narrow professional framework; it was combined with broader comment on all aspects of life. That was a distinguishing feature of Soviet literature. Even during the war it was preoccupied with moral problems, the responsibility of the hero for his acts, with the writers describing friendship, comradeship, and love. A number of major works giving insight into the nature of Soviet patriotism and humanism were written. And writers lashed out at the shortcomings which impeded the Soviet Army's victory over the enemy (*Front* by Alexander Korneichuk).

The postwar period saw an even greater trend towards epic and all-sided depiction of events and people in the Great Patriotic War. The advance of history gave the writer a new reference point and enabled him to look at particular events from the vantage point of his time. That already determined the new character of generalisation in postwar Soviet writings. First-hand experiences and observations and knowledge of concrete facts seen in a historical perspective enhanced the effect of concrete generalisation.

The achievements of Soviet literature in deep and many-sided description of the war and in pioneering new forms of generalisation are in keeping with the best traditions of Soviet literature of the war and postwar periods.

Why did Sholokhov's story *The Fate of a Man* attract such attention of the critics and move readers? Why was Bondarchuk's screen adaptation of that story such a triumphant success in and outside the Soviet Union?

Critics were quick to notice the epic nature of that work, describing its genre as "a little novel" or "a novel in the shape of a story". Literary scholars and critics began analysing the style and composition, noting the expressiveness and deep implications of the methods used and the motives of the work.

The author himself considered this story to be "an approach to a large conversation about the war". If one considers that the story is a tribute to the spiritual generosity and nobleness of the people's character, of a rank-and-file Soviet man who displayed his extraordinary qualities during the war, it will be clear that Sholokhov's story

is "an approach" to the basic ideological and aesthetic problem facing Soviet literature today—and that is to show the decisive role of the people in the Great Patriotic War.

Sholokhov's story *The Fate of a Man* shows the main features of the new period in the development of Soviet prose which is marked by stark realism in depicting the dark sides of war, profound psychological insight into the soul of the Soviet man fighting in the war, a poetic description of the moral beauty and strength of the common soldier who has lived through all the hardship without forfeiting his basic humanity.

The story is very expressive. It focuses on dramatic and extraordinary events which were so common during the war. The main motives stand out and acquire symbolic significance.

Sholokhov's story pioneers new principles of generalisation. He achieves an epic effect not by describing events and emphasising their scope, but by revealing the rich inner world of Andrei Sokolov, the unusual fortitude, grit, strong will, and daring of the common Soviet man.

Sholokhov shows how small things reflect the larger drama of the time and human drama. He concentrates on the personality of the hero. The events in his story are seen through the eyes of the character. And everything comes to light with psychological and historical precision in all its individuality. We see a slice of life. The story takes the shape of the confession of a man who has seen and experienced so much and has acquired such wordly wisdom that his every word is truth pure and simple. That truth has a startling effect on us. It has its own inherent laws. The natural flow of the narrative never falters. We see a "stream of life" from which only the key events are singled out. They are given special dramatic quality. And in this, I think, lies the secret of the generalised epic quality of Sholokhov's story, the secret of his innovatory approach. Sholokhov's realism in that story is austere and at the same time inspired and poetic. The writer shows the new dialectic relationship between the destiny of an individual and history, which was a feature of the Great Patriotic War.

Andrei Sokolov's life at war is tragic but also heroic. Few writers were able to portray the tragedy of war and human suffering with the same harrowing impact as did Sholokhov in his story. The reader is poignantly aware of the inferno

through which Andrei Sokolov has lived. The war has deprived him of everything, his health, family, and home. His son died on the last day of the war. Concrete facts acquire historical significance. We see the dear price the Soviet people paid for victory. Through the destiny of an individual we can visualise the war as a clash of two opposing forces. The writer does not blur his attitude towards the basic conflict of the time. He exposes nazism which visited untold suffering on the people and inflicted wounds which could never be healed. The consequences of the war cast their tragic shadow on Andrei Sokolov's life. The story of human loss in *The Fate of a Man* is retrospective and tragic like the time which allows such forces as fascism to exist.

That, however, is only one aspect of the narrative in Sholokhov's story. The other aspect is the strength of Andrei Sokolov's character and the generous heart of the hero. These two aspects are not separate, they are dialectically interconnected. Through them, the writer conveys not only the drama of his time but the new traits which were highlighted by the Great Patriotic War—viz. that tragic circumstances ceased to have fatal dominion over man. Andrei Sokolov triumphs over the most dreadful phenomena of life. History succumbs to the will of an individual who knows in the name of what he is fighting. That lends a special quality to the drama, creates a feeling of history and gives a life-asserting message to Andrei Sokolov's behaviour.

Herein lies the secret of the epic quality of Sholokhov's story. It took for an extraordinary artistic talent to see the reflections of large things in small things. The past opens up before us like a raging ocean. And along with Andrei Sokolov we seem to live once more through what he has lived passing through the fiery billow of war. The writer looks closely into the inner world of his character, identifies himself with his feelings and experiences, and measures his time by the yardstick of the new man on whose actions depends everything on earth: the destiny of the little boy Vanyatka, the destiny of the writer, and the destiny of the world at large.

The lofty humanity of the new man takes on a new quality. It is the promise of eternal renewal of life, of the triumph of man's better nature over the forces of darkness and evil. The lyrical element of the story also has a new quality: it combines with the epic element lending it inner

strength and bursting to the surface at the end of the story in a powerful crescendo emphasising the main message of the story: a nation consisting of such persons as Andrei Sokolov is the maker of history. And it can withstand any trials. In the final scene two figures are seen walking: Andrei Sokolov, grey-haired after all the trials he had lived through, and his adopted son Vanyatka. That final scene broadens the horizon, creating a perspective and revealing the unity of the subjective and objective elements which acquired a new significance in the story:

"The boy ran to his side, took hold of the corner of his jacket and started off with tiny steps beside his striding father.

"...What did the future hold for them? I wanted to believe that this Russian, this man of unbreakable will, would stick it out, and that the boy would grow at his father's side into a man who could endure anything, overcome any obstacle if his country called upon him to do so."

The texture of Sholokhov's story is imbued with the people's perception of the world in all its innate strength and richness.

II

The undeniable achievements of the contemporary Soviet literature in depicting the Great Patriotic War include not only the broader range in covering the events of the war but also growing attention of the writers to the sources of human behaviour in war and to revealing the underlying features that make man a hero. The deepening historical approach mentioned above is combined in such writings with profound psychological analysis of the inner state of the hero.

It is not by chance that Alexander Kron in his novel *The House and the Ship* tackles anew, as it were, the ideas which he dramatised in his play *Naval Officer*. The novel genre enables the author to portray events over a longer span of time, to motivate his characters' behaviour with greater depth, and to reveal their experiences and complex thoughts. The conflict between Gorbunov and Kondratiev which provides the pivot of the play *Naval Officer* is, in Kron's novel, set against a larger historical background,

including the description of besieged Leningrad, the stories of many people connected with Leningrad, the Baltic fleet and the crew of submarine "202". Personal relationships are more detailed and moral problems are dramatised. All that makes for deeper analysis of the historical situation and the feelings of the main characters, the images take on greater significance (that is true in particular of Gorbunov, the helmsman Solovtsev, the mine layer Kayurov, doctor Grisha, engineer Zaitsev, and foreman Kazyurin). At its best, the novel achieves historical and psychological truth in the depiction of events and the behaviour of people with different characters and ideas about life. The idea of moral purity and the notions of honour and duty are not only used as a criterion to appraise the behaviour of the characters (that could be found in the play *Naval Officer* as well) but come to express the basic qualities of Soviet society and pinpoint the features of the Soviet people which ensured their victory over the enemy. So the novel establishes the link between the past and the present.

I must, however, point out some of the drawbacks of A. Kron's *The House and the Ship*. Chief of them is the undue emphasis on negative types in some parts of the novel. The negative types themselves (especially Selyanin and Odnorukov) are described very vividly. Undoubtedly in describing them the author sought to dramatise important questions, i.e., the responsibility of the individual for his behaviour. He opposed the negative types to the positive ones and wanted to emphasise the strength and nobility of the positive heroes. In some parts of the novel, however, there are exaggerations and the emphasis is shifted from the positive to the negative as Selyanin and Odnorukov come to the foreground. That impairs the composition of the novel and the balance of the general picture, in which the main element was heroic.

L. Pervomaisky's novel *Wild Honey* is typical of Soviet literature today as regards psychological insight and historical truth in describing events.

The author of the novel concentrates on people, their behaviour and the dialectics of their feelings and thoughts. The novel is so structured that the events of the war and episodes from contemporary life alternate. That creates an impression of a long span of life; "the joint of time" is effected in the novel.

The author singles out for detailed description key episodes from major events of the war (the defence of Kiev and the battle in the Kursk Bulge). He is interested not in events for their own sake but their development and man's behaviour in war and his responsibility for his actions. Such a profound, detailed, and thoroughgoing description of episodes of the war in Pervomaisky's novel is accompanied by attention to the inner world of his characters.

The writer in his novel gives a gallery of diverse human types penetrating into their inner world and dramatising moral problems. The tense situations at the front during the defence of Kiev and the battle in the Kursk Bulge, when the Soviet troops were preparing for an offensive, enabled the writer to describe the behaviour of his heroes from different angles, to show their main qualities manifested under difficult conditions when one had to be utterly honest before oneself and before one's comrades.

When the writer combines the depiction of characters and dramatic unfolding of events, his narrative acquires particular expressiveness. Both events and characters are described from many angles and with minute detail and at the same time are seen in the historical context. Hence the compelling impact of the descriptions of the defence of Kiev and the heroic behaviour of General Kostenetsky who in a critical situation assumes responsibility for the course of the battle and issues a stern but the only possible order on which depends the destiny of many people and the whole future. Hence the memorable picture of Soviet troops preparing for the offensive in the Kursk Bulge and the heroic behaviour of a handful of Soviet people led by enlisted man Guloyan, who have fulfilled their duty to the last. Pervomaisky brings psychological flair and drama to showing that a sense of responsibility to one's country, honesty, and high morality are the features common to Soviet people. They are equally characteristic of General Kostenetsky who commands great respect in his division and of the rank-and-file soldier Guloyan who is aware of the importance of his duty on the front fireline. The writer gives poetic portraits of heroes and admires the moral beauty and dignity of these men. For the writer, as for the novel's main female character, Varvara Knyazhich, morality is inseparable from social duty. The harmony of these two elements is the measure of humanity.

That idea makes Pervomaisky's novel consonant with our own time. By alternating wartime events with those of today and stressing the nobleness of the people whose notion of honesty goes hand-in-hand with the sense of duty the writer pinpoints the main features of the Soviet character and traces the sources of the heroism displayed by the Soviet man at crucial moments of history.

III

Soviet writers turning to the war theme today are keenly aware that "the distance of time" creates a new dialectic tension between the historical events, whose essence comes out more and more clearly with every passing year (its historical significance increases) and art which is called upon to describe that phenomenon ever more deeply and from different sides. That was keenly felt by the younger generation of writers who came along recently. They know about the war at first hand (many of them, like their older fellow-writers, themselves took part in the war) and they have brought a new theme and new attitude to war.

The writers of the new generation have individual style, idiom, and narrative manner. But they have one common feature, and that is particular perceptiveness to the truth, a wish to be thoroughly authentic in describing events, and especially the heroes' behaviour in battle. There are grounds for saying that the works of the new generation of Soviet writers brought greater authenticity to the description of the battle situation, the tragic sides of the war, and the intimate feelings and thoughts of the characters.

The writers of the new generation are particularly sensitive to moral problems which have always been at the focus of Soviet literature (the notion of duty, honesty, responsibility, comradeship, friendship, and love). These writers usually based their stories on one dramatic event involving a limited number of characters. That enabled them to achieve maximum truthfulness both in following through an event and in depicting the behaviour of the character and his feelings and thoughts.

Many young writers (especially in their publicistic work) tended to pass off their predilection for concrete detail for the only correct road to artistic truth. That triggered a

polemic over the question of the scope of narrative (the polemic about a "two-mile map" and a "globe"). Some of those who took part in the polemic went to extremes. Even so it highlighted the need to look for new forms of generalisation, the need to overcome one-sidedness in depicting wartime events and the behaviour of the hero at war, and fixation on a fact without interpreting it. The question was raised sharply of the need for greater "thought-content" of writing about the Great Patriotic War.

Fortunately, the writings of the young authors proved to be better than their theoretical reasonings. In their best works they did not shy away from generalisation. By building their stories around small groups of characters and descriptions of a single event, neither Bondarev in "The Last Salvoes" nor A. Ananiev in the story "Tanks Go in Diamond Formation", nor V. Bykov in "Alpine Ballad" tried to snatch events out of the general context of war. On the contrary, they tried to show them as part of a whole. These writers have their individual approach. Their works were marked by drama and particular flair in describing the behaviour of the characters in battle. Their works focused not on events as such but on the characters and inner world of the heroes revealed during battle. That approach promised new discoveries.

In Ananiev's "Tanks Go in Diamond Formation" what struck the readers was freshness in delineating characters, ability to convey through the individual feelings and experiences of the characters the large world of Soviet soldiers when they are engaged in battle against the enemy. Soviet soldier and commander, even if he looks at the battlefield through the narrow slit in the tank (A. Ananiev's story is about an episode of the tank battle in the Kursk Bulge), thinks and feels with such breadth and his heart is full of such passions that we forget about the immediate scope of the story. The tank battle is part of the larger battle waged by the nation. The world perception of the tankman encompasses the whole country and is part of a larger world. The unusual situation (the writer sees the world through the eyes of a person engaged in mortal battle) shows what makes his characters tick, and traces the sources of their courage and their behaviour at critical moments.

Yuri Bondarev is also looking for new forms of generalisation. Perhaps no writer has raised the question of the

moral standards of the hero with such force as Yuri Bondarev in his story "The Last Salvoes". Critics quickly noted the special style of the story and the writer's ability to convey the emotions of the character and the drama of the situation through psychological details. The questions of good and evil, the cruelty of war and the humanism of the Soviet man are in Bondarev's works raised in a very concrete manner, which enables him to avoid being one-sided and to solve complex problems with artistic truth.

All the thoughts of captain Novikov are on winning the battle. He is caught up in a critical situation and all the qualities of his character are revealed in the way he performs just one function. But that function was so important and made such great demands on will power, intelligence and dedication to the common cause that there was no question of one-sidedness in the portrayal of the hero.

Yuri Bondarev has been criticised for making his hero too austere and too exacting towards himself and his subordinates. The writer shows, however, that these traits of Novikov's behaviour are not part of his nature. They are due to the circumstances and the harsh wartime.

It is another question that the author of the story does not quite succeed in revealing his character's inner world. At times Novikov feels more sharply than he thinks. And we only see him for a brief period before he dies in battle. But the way he behaves in battle, his dedication to duty, his considerate attitude towards his comrades, his honesty and sincerity—all this tells us a great deal about the type of man forged by the war and about the extent of sacrifice made by the Soviet people to defeat the ruthless enemy.

The fact that the author set out to glorify this type of man and show his best qualities as manifested in the extreme situation of battle was beneficial for him. It lent Bondarev's story a special atmosphere and made it a vehicle for his outstanding gift.

Yuri Bondarev's next novel, *The Hot Snow*, depicted events and characters on a larger scale. The novel is dramatic. It speaks about a crucial moment of the Battle of Stalingrad, in which Soviet troops beat off a tank strike by the nazis (Manstein's Goth group) who wanted to cut a corridor from Kotelnikovo to the Sixth Army of Paulus encircled near Stalingrad. That episode fits into the general situation in the Great Patriotic War and is part of the great

battle on which depends the outcome of the Stalingrad Battle and of the whole war. One episode brings into a single focus the various aspects of an historic event. Here the destiny of the war, the fate of two strategic plans, of two opposing forces is being decided. The characters of various people—from Army Commander Bessonov to the soldiers in the trenches—are revealed through their behaviour at that historical moment.

As in his previous stories, Yuri Bondarev displays his skill at describing the psychology of battle, man's behaviour in it, his feelings and reactions, sharpened by the unusual situation. His novel is concerned with moral questions. But the characters in the novel are in bolder relief than in his stories.

This is due partly to the larger scope of the novel. But not only that. The scope in itself means nothing in art. It depends first and foremost on the new type of concrete generalisation, on the structure of the imagery and artistic system of the novel which the writer is painfully and stubbornly elaborating. He looks at events and people from a different angle.

While in his stories Yuri Bondarev depicted the events of the war only as seen by those immediately involved in battle, focusing on their perception of the world, with the general situation at the front described as a backdrop only, in the novel events are seen both from the viewpoint of those directly involved in battle (Lieutenant Kuznetsov) and from the viewpoint of the Army Commander, General Bessonov, Army Commissar Vesnin, and others. The general situation at the front is not just a background for a single event but a factor in itself, a typical circumstance in which the heroes of the novel act and exhibit their qualities. The novel is peopled by very diverse characters and proceeds on many levels. The action shifts from the trenches to the command post, to the army headquarters. Thus, Bondarev's novel does not only have larger scope than his stories, but also combines the "large" (general run of battle) and "small" (the heroic feat of the battery of Kuznetsov which, in the novel's frame of reference, is far from "small"). The writer shows that all the sections of the battle, "small" and "large", interact and interweave, just like the lives of all the participants in the battle. This blend of the large and the small in the novel gives it inner coherence. The concrete

narrative acquires many levels and a generalised message.

The writer does not avoid sharp corners in describing events (the situation at the section where the Germans broke through Soviet army lines is very grave) and in depicting characters. He preserves, however, a particular angle. The features of the characters—from Army Commander Bessonov to gunlayer Nechayev—are revealed most of all through their attitude towards events which decide the outcome of the battle. Given the wide scope of events and many levels of narrative, this angle enables the writer to people the novel with different characters, persons of different temper, convictions, and behaviour, and to show confrontations between them. Their actions acquire great historical meaning. Towering among them is the figure of Bessonov, a man of strong will who has lived through great hardship and has been tempered in the fierce battle of 1941. He realises the gravity of the situation near Stalingrad at the time of Manstein's tank attack and acts with determination and severity to his subordinates as prompted by the situation. In this situation, the clash of characters takes on great meaning (the clash between Commissar Vesnin and Counter-Intelligence Chief Osinin).

Man's behaviour in battle, his attitude to his duty, and his mentality—all these qualities assume particular importance in the novel because they describe characters from many sides highlighting their features and, most important, the differences between them which come out not only in their personal relations but in their attitude towards the main events which determine individual fates and the outcome of the battle. Such differences develop between Battalion Commander Drozdovsky, a "model" soldier but a soulless person, and Captain Kuznetsov. That creates a rapport between Kuznetsov and the men in his regiment—Davletyan, Ukhanov, Nechayev—and his confrontation with Drozdovsky. Drozdovsky in that respect—while a typical character in itself—stands in isolation. Meanwhile the united community of soldiers and commanders, such as Kuznetsov, Ukhanov, and Nechayev appears as typical of the whole Soviet Army.

Along with the change of angle in Yuri Bondarev's novel *The Hot Snow* the methods of typification also change. In his stories, the personality of the writer merged with that of the character. That enhanced the emotionalism of the

narrative giving particular poignancy to the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist. The narrative relied heavily on inner monologue, with the story told by a participant in the event—immediate reaction to what is taking place before his eyes, with the bare feelings and thoughts which overwhelmed the character when he faced a decision and sometimes acted contrary to common sense in the name of his lofty sense of duty. Events, people's behaviour, and attitude to various aspects of life—all were conveyed in Yuri Bondarev's story through the prism of a soldier's mind.

In the novel *The Hot Snow*, Yuri Bondarev falls back on these methods when giving the portrait of Kuznetsov and describing his behaviour, thoughts, and feelings (the writer incurred some criticism for using his old methods and turning them into a cliché). But Yuri Bondarev goes further. He enriches his palette. Along with emotional narrative (a lyrical monologue) he uses epic forms of narrative such as author's description of events, their perception by Besonov, Vesnin, and Deyev who, owing to their high position, can see events in a larger perspective and can tackle strategic tasks. The character is separated from the person of the author and acts and thinks according to his own inherent logic. The epic and emotional streaks of Yuri Bondarev's novel *The Hot Snow* interact in a new way. They are not always in perfect harmony. Sometimes spheres of action are rigidly divided between them. On the whole, however, there are signs of a very interesting attempt to find new forms of emotional-epic expressiveness in writing about the war and the behaviour of Soviet men in war.

Thus the desire to understand events and human acts profoundly and from many angles (in their historical context) leads the author to some achievements and helps him find new ways for artistic portrayal of real facts. Everything stands or falls with the position of the writer.

IV

Among numerous proofs of the importance of a correct view of history and a correct concept is the work of such a major author as Vassili Grossman. Grossman took a long time writing his novel *For the Right Cause*. The first book appeared in 1952 to provoke some criticism. He then

revised the novel in 1954 and in 1959 making considerable changes (especially in the second and third edition¹). However, the final text of the novel did not get the critical attention it merited. Meanwhile, the writer's experience in writing that novel is instructive.

It was conceived as a broad canvas, a full and many-sided story of the Battle of Stalingrad which marked the turning point in the Great Patriotic War. The underlying structure of the novel was that of "family nests". Critics saw that as a drawback. Such a subject structure put at the focus of the novel the families of Shaposhnikov, Strumm and others who did not take part in the war directly.

And yet even in the first edition, the author's ambitions were far more complex. Grossman tried to show the link of human destinies with the destiny of the war. He felt that he could achieve that by adopting the "family nest" approach. He considered that the main thing for an artist is not to describe events but to reveal the innermost qualities of man which are dramatically revealed at crucial moments, when the situation tests the real worth of man. The Battle of Stalingrad provided material for such interpretation of events and human lives. The "family nest" structure of the novel enabled the writer to recreate the atmosphere of the time, to depict his characters profoundly and from many sides, give us insight in their thoughts and feelings. The fact that the novel was focused on the Battle of Stalingrad, the central event of the war, enabled the writer to give a broad picture of the life of different people and heroes, to pursue the narrative at many levels without fear of leaving the Battle of Stalingrad out of sight. The writer tried to trace the sources of heroic behaviour at war and described history as manifestation of intellectual power through the moral state of his heroes. The central task for him was to reveal the mentality of the Soviet man and the specific features of his personality which were highlighted at the turning point of the war.

If we recall that by 1952 Soviet literature had accumu-

¹ The first edition of *For the Right Cause* was published in *Novy Mir* magazine in 1952. The second edition was published in book form by Voengiz Publishing House in 1954. The third edition was brought out by Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers in 1959. The final version, with only slight alteration compared with that of 1959, came out in 1964 (Sovetsky Pisatel).

lated considerable experience in depicting the war and war heroes, we shall see that Grossman in his novel tackled one of the central tasks of Soviet literature. He tried to link accurate description of the war with profound description of heroic characters engaged in history-making endeavours. Of course it would have been easier for the writer to concentrate on describing the events. After all, with his background of wartime correspondent, he knew facts and could write about military strategy and tactics with competence. But he realised that the real portrait of the time could only be conveyed through living characters by combining a broad panorama of their life with historical events.

Of course this was a great challenge, for the writer had to work out his own concept and views both on the run of the war and on the potential of the people who amazed the world by their valour and in what seemed a hopeless situation scored a spectacular victory near Stalingrad to change the course of war in their favour.

It must be admitted that even in the first edition of the novel Grossman achieved a great deal. Alexander Fadeyev was right when he defended Grossman's novel at the Second Congress of Writers in 1954 pointing out the significance of the writer's work on the war theme for Soviet literature. The main merits of the novel are vivid characterisations of people in war; the intellectual atmosphere of the time gives us an idea of what engaged people's minds and sentiments and how they behaved at the time.

True, the writer failed in that early edition to fuse the depiction of characters and events, and convey the movement of history along with the stories of the individuals. The first edition manifests subjectivist prejudices of the author and erroneous philosophical views.

Individual story lines of families in the novel were treated as ends in themselves (the Shaposhnikov family, the family story of Strumm, Lyudmila, and so on). The writer failed to place his accents right and to focus attention on the heroes involved in the events of the war and thus not only reflected the time indirectly but also took part in the war and influenced its course.

The writer's poetic admiration for the law force of Chepyzhin's talent led the writer to identify himself with his views on the world process. These views were somewhat mechanistic. Chepyzhin saw the world process as circular

movement of scattered forces. While rejecting fascism, Chepyzhin was wrong about its social sources. His "energetism" was combined with intuitivism and was in a certain sense Freudian. Chepyzhin said that "man is a mixture of everything" and that man's dark instincts are constantly at war with good ones. Fascism, according to Chepyzhin, is a product of the "basement floors of conscience". In the "mechanistic struggle" of opposite forces under fascism all the base ingredients of man come to the surface, the forces of evil triumph, and then the bestial instincts of man prevail.

In the first edition of the novel, the philosophical framework was faulty. The writer's excessive attention to the story lines of Strumm and Chepyzhin resulted in the central event of the war being overshadowed by the series of these men. Moreover, the characters of Strumm and Chepyzhin were more vivid and expressive than those of the immediate participants in the war.

Even so, the first edition of the novel in its main parts comes very close to conveying the spirit of the time through the destinies of people. The writer already found the principles of conveying the complex military situation of 1942 by showing the characters in their dialectical interaction with the complex circumstances of the time. He was feeling his way towards a synthetic depiction of events and characters in their unity.

The composition of the first edition of the novel (whose basic framework has been kept in the final version) has some distinctive features. The narrative in the novel develops in concentric circles building up to its climax without losing its drama. This approach makes it possible to convey the situation that took shape on the Stalingrad front. The first part of the novel spans a large period of time from the start of the war until the battle of the Don. That part clearly reveals the strength and the weakness of having the plot lines follow the "family nest" pattern. The writer depicts characters and through them tries to convey the atmosphere of the wartime. Sometimes descriptions of the war are removed from the actions of characters and are not blended with them. Nevertheless, by depicting his characters broadly and from many sides, the writer gives us an idea of the circumstances before the Battle of Stalingrad.

The second part of the novel concentrates on describing

the military situation on the Stalingrad front. The high point of that part is a massive German air-raid of Stalingrad. The writer shows the dramatic change which war brought to the life of the city and of his characters. Already in that part we see synthetic portrayal of events and characters. The narrative concentrates on the most dramatic moments which abounded in the Battle of Stalingrad, without losing the general perspective. On the contrary, concreteness of description enhances the epic quality of the pictures drawn by the author.

The third part of the novel concentrates on the run of the Stalingrad Battle taking the action to the city streets. The author details with historical accuracy all the vicissitudes of the battle, the position of the troops, the enemy's strategic plan, and the counter-actions of the Soviet command. That part bears witness to Vassili Grossman's experience as war correspondent with a knack for describing the strategy of the battle and analysing the tactical skill of the Soviet command along with the description of the actual battle.

The narrative here also develops in concentric circles (the general panorama of the front, the plan of the front's commander, the position of the 62nd Army which has dug in in strongholds of the city, the crossing by Rodimtsev's division, a massive German attack on the besieged city, and the heroic fight put up by Filyashkin's battalion). The narrative builds up to its climax (the battle for the railway station where Filyashkin's battalion displayed such valour). The writer tells with the impartiality of a chronicler about the behaviour of the people in the Battle of Stalingrad. The narrative achieves epic power. The battle for the railway station and the heroism of Filyashkin's battalion are elements in the overall picture of the battle. Such synthetic generalisation, when the concrete is shown as part of a whole, in all its historical individuality—lends great significance to the heroism of Filyashkin's battalion. It highlights the balance of forces at the turning point of the Great Patriotic War. The focus is on the high morale of the Soviet man, his fortitude, and sense of duty. This is seen from the behaviour of the commanders and soldiers in Filyashkin's battalion starting from battalion commander himself and ending with the soldiers Vavilov, Malyarchuk, Rezchikov, Urusov, Zaichikov, and Elena Gnatyuk. Each of them is an

individuality behaving in battle in accordance with his or her character and the situation. But they all are united by the determination to fight the enemy to the last. The writer achieves unity in depicting characters and circumstances. The synthesis of the concrete and the general invests the story of the heroic battalion with enormous meaning. The description of the height of the battle, which witnesses the valour of Filyashkin's battalion reflects the overall pattern of the war.

Two forces are locked in mortal combat, each displaying its nature. One still preserves a kind of mechanical momentum. But it is already eroding and its impetus is decreasing. The other force is still on the defensive, unable as yet to deliver crushing blows, but it displays such fortitude and inner energy, such tenacity that it is clear that the victory will eventually come its way. The German strength has been undermined and the strength of the Soviet Army is like a compressed spring which is beginning to uncoil. It has crushing hidden might.

Thus, through the agency of art the particular provides a compressed and dramatic expression of the characteristic. The writer's dialectic thought and deep knowledge of life enabled him to give vivid epic pictures even in the first version of the novel in which the characters of the people at war are drawn along with the description of the high points of the Battle of Stalingrad.

In re-working his novel Vassili Grossman built on what he had achieved. He tried to bridge the gap between the philosophical concept of his book and the description of the war and the historic meaning of the Stalingrad Battle. He achieves coherence in the description of characters and events.

To begin with, he describes more precisely Chepyzhin's and Strumm's views. While in the first version of the novel Strumm tacitly agreed with Chepyzhin's idea that history moves in a closed circle, the final version has him challenge Chepyzhin's view. He takes the conversation about fascism from theoretical reasonings to a concrete level. He points to the social sources of fascism; "...Hitlerism did not spring up out of nowhere... Monstrous chauvinism, *Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles*'—Hitler was not the first to think it up... When Hitler was rising to power he knew that he was offering a commodity that wouldn't gather dust on the

shelves: he had his kin among industrialists, the Prussian landowners, the officers, and the burghers... Fascism is related to the whole German reaction of the past, but it is a special kind, more horrid than anything before it."

Strumm refutes Chepyzhin's philosophy, takes issue with his definition of human nature as "a mixed bag" and proves the concept of history moving in a circle to be untenable: "...By adopting your scheme one is bound to become a pessimist, not an optimist: your concept of the mixed bag denies progress and forward movement... Your scheme is faulty because its underlying mechanical principle is, to my mind, totally inapplicable to the explanation of social phenomena... It implies stagnation because under such a set-up even the revolutionary struggles of the working class cannot change society, cannot elevate man to a higher stage... But in social life there is no return to the past, it is not a key-board on which you can play the same tune many times."

To strengthen his exposure of the social roots of fascism, Grossman adds chapters on Hitler to the second and third editions of the novel. He shows Hitler as the product of Prussian reaction and military imperialism which in Germany acquired the ugliest and most inhuman forms. He raises the question of the role of the personality in history stressing that Hitler's policy is historically doomed because it runs counter to the whole course of history. All the policies proclaimed by Hitler contributed to his undoing. Everything he fought against eventually triumphed.

The additions changed the philosophical framework of the novel, cast a new light on the characters and on the main conflict of the time which was manifested in the Second World War and Nazi Germany's perfidious attack against the Soviet Union.

Thus, the events of the war were shown in a more authentic light in later editions of Grossman's novel.

The historical background broadens. The final version of the novel begins with the chapter about Hitler's meeting with Mussolini in Salzburg before the start of the 1942 offensive. The chapter describes the situation at the front and Hitler's plans of the summer campaign. Newly added chapters (23rd and 24th) describe the plans of the Nazi Command to seize Stalingrad. They show the meeting between Paulus and Richthofen which gives us an idea of Hitler's crazy dream of a world empire (breakthrough to

India) as he planned the seizure of Stalingrad.

Along with the description of the enemy camp, the final text of Grossman's novel has more to say about the strategic plans of the Soviet command. The battles are described in two dimensions. Grossman exhibits profound competence in military questions. He elaborates his description of the run of the Battle of Stalingrad by introducing new facts. He tells us more about Front Commander Eremenko as a person and as a military leader. He gives an account of Eremenko's meeting with General Chuikov on the eve of the decisive battle on the Stalingrad Front and in describing their plans recreates the course of the battles. He also introduces the considerations of Colonel Novikov about the advantages of a more flexible deep defence, and Krymov's arguments against the doctrine of defensive war on alien territory. He quotes from Darensky's diary about the genius of Kutuzov, about retreat and counter-offensive in the Patriotic War of 1812.

Along with a broader historical background the new editions of Grossman's novel show a closer link between the description of the direct participants in the war and the description of the actual combat scenes. Accordingly, the writer pays more attention to Krymov and Novikov. He adds more chapters about the courage and resolution of Krymov who takes his unit out of encirclement, stresses Krymov's popularity and the mutual love and respect which link him and the soldiers. The writer tries to link Novikov's character more immediately with the general plot and to impart individual features to him.

Even in the final text of the novel the writer does not always achieve graphic portrayal of the participants in the events along with the description of the key moments of the Stalingrad Battle. But he scores some successes, as for example, the vivid figure of Major Beriozkin, an experienced soldier. The image of the battle-trying hero etches itself on memory. But Beriozkin appears only fleetingly and his storyline is not followed up.

Of course the broadening of the historical background in the novel resulted in the portrayal of the wartime with all its disparate elements. But the broadening of background was often achieved through adding narrative detail, and not through creating vivid emotional pictures. As will be seen in the case of Krymov, the characters did not

become more expressive in the later editions. The novel thus became more diffuse and discursive. Increased quantity did not translate itself into greater artistic expressiveness.

Vassili Grossman was aware of the importance of vividly describing the key moments of the war along with the actions, feelings, and thoughts of the characters. The characters are most expressive when the events in which they are taking part are described as perceived by them. Then the events and the characters are thrown in bold relief. This is true of the description of the first day of the war, the German attack on Brest, and Novikov's keen awareness not only of the tragedy which befell his country but also of the great spirit and heroism displayed by the people in adversity.

But in the other parts of the novel Novikov does not strike us as an individual character. This despite the fact that the writer does everything to "sell" him, by making him a man of outstanding ability, pitting him against the doctrinaire Bykov (chief of operations at the headquarters), bringing him in contact with the talented headquarters' officer Darensky. Novikov is nurturing plans of using a new tactic in war—combining deep defense with greater mobility of tank forces, massive breakthrough at the flanks in close interaction with all the arms of the service.

At the crunch moments in the Battle of Stalingrad Novikov seems to be removed from the actual events. He acts as a kind of messenger bringing reports from the front. He has no chance of displaying his strong will and original thinking. Sometimes the character appears as too rational, at times becoming just a mouthpiece for the author's ideas.

In the second part of the novel Grossman brings about a sharp turn in Novikov's life in an attempt to bring into harmony the aspects in the description of the character. At the peak of the Battle of Stalingrad Novikov is appointed commander of a reserve tank corps. He gets a chance to carry out his pet plan, to prepare the tank corps for a massive quick thrust. This expresses an important idea of the novel. It shows that even at critical moments of the Battle of Stalingrad the Soviet Supreme Command was confident of victory, was planning a broad offensive, heeded the opinion of talented commanders and gave them responsible assignments. That opens up an important perspective for the novel and for Novikov. Unfortunately, this is all

given in bare outline and is described in the novel in the bland language reminiscent of newspaper reporting. Novikov does not attain the stature of a typical character.

The experience of Grossman the novelist is another proof of the importance of combining full and vivid description of the events and typical characters. A correct grasp of the wider implications of the events is decisive for the writer. Otherwise erroneous views and the artist's subjective perceptions are bound to tell on the way he treats certain episodes of the war and the characters and to affect the composition and artistic structure of the work.

V

That holds good for all writers, including those whose entire work is devoted to the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). They seek new means for a more profound depiction of the events and heroes of the Great Patriotic War. Konstantin Simonov's experience offers an instructive example.

Like many contemporaries, Konstantin Simonov was with the Soviet Army throughout the war, and had always tried to show the war truthfully. He had breadth of vision. Documentary precision in his works was accompanied by an attempt to analyse events and show man at war. He tried to look at the war through the eyes of its participants and to convey their feelings and thoughts. That is why the front-line reports by Simonov, which bear the telltale title *From the Barentz to the Black Sea* are still valuable today.

Already in Simonov's wartime writings one can discern a desire to show, along with the "life in the trenches", a general picture and to portray typical characters in a certain light—in the light of the historical importance of the war. His reflections on events were combined with concrete descriptions of battles. That was highlighted by Simonov's work (together with the director Pudovkin) on the published script called *The Smolensk Highway*. It contained early pointers to future trends in Simonov's writing.

In the preface to the screenplay the authors wrote: "We have taken our heroes through the disappointments of the early days, through errors, setbacks, through moments and days of bewilderment and sorrow—through all that the men and commanders in that war had actually lived as the war,

its meaning and pattern gradually revealed themselves.”

The dramatic tension of the events in the screenplay prompted a special composition of the scenes to show how the soldiers gradually acquire combat skill and prowess—with all the tragic sides of the process which taxed man's power of endurance to the limit.

The dialectic thinking of the authors of the screenplay and their profound knowledge of life enabled them, on the one hand, to recreate the atmosphere of the war with precision, with the scenes of the retreat, confusion, and chaos, and on the other hand, to show the stiffening resistance of the Soviet Army, the will, organisation, and cohesion of the Soviet soldiers and commanders, to show the maturing of those forces which eventually ensured the Soviet Army's victory. In that respect the screenplay *The Smolensk Highway* is a harbinger of the novel *The Living and the Dead*, containing as it does, not only preliminary sketches of some characters and situations but also the main idea which was treated with greater depth and completeness in the novel.

The authors of the script have selected key episodes from the chain of events described in the diary of the frontline correspondent Pavlov. The episodes pay tribute to the heroism of Soviet soldiers and commanders, and their greater military skill acquired in fierce fighting. The character of Colonel Kutepov, whose unit puts up a successful defence of the city, destroys German tanks, displaying exemplary organisation and discipline, foreshadows the character of Serpilin in the novel.¹

¹ Kutepov was a real commander who died in action near Mogilev. Simonov gives a brief sketch of him in his book *Conversation with Comrades* (Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1970, pp. 271-274). Colonel Kutepov was born in the village of Kalmyki, Bolokhovskiy district, in the Tula area in 1896. At the start of the war he commanded a regiment in Efremov, Belyov, and other towns in the Moscow Military District. Kutepov displayed amazing courage and military prowess during the defence of Mogilev. The meeting between war correspondent Konstantin Simonov and Colonel Kutepov, who had no intention of retreating despite an extremely difficult situation, presages the meeting between Sintsov and Serpilin in the novel *The Living and the Dead* (the episode is based on Simonov's notes as a correspondent). Kutepov succeeded in leading his regiment in a breakthrough out of the enemy encirclement. But he was wounded in both legs during the engagement. Carried to safety by the soldiers, he bled to death.

However, because the script had the form of a diary, broad generalisations were difficult to achieve. The action in the script was a quick succession of episodes which shifted from one place to another. The characters were sometimes only sketchily delineated. In a preface, the authors of the script described it as "a diary of the war and not a history written after the war". They dispense with the "retrospective historical view" which is necessary to get a complete picture of events.

When Simonov started writing his novel *The Living and the Dead* in 1955 twelve years had passed since he wrote the script of *The Smolensk Highway* and the time had come for a "retrospective historical view" and a synthetic and generalised depiction of the war. But the writer took some time before he found the right approach to depict the events and heroes of the war profoundly and in their dialectical unity.

The geographical space of the novel was great: "...Murmansk, Byelorussia, the Crimea, Odessa... While the action shifted from place to place the problems of the first year of the war were the same everywhere. To use military jargon, *I was not building up effort on the main direction of the novel about 1941*, and instead sent my troops piecemeal to different places, failing to achieve a breakthrough anywhere... *There seemed to be everything but the main thing, the real core of the war*" (emphasis added—V.N.).

The writer was keenly aware that he would not be able to achieve a general view without focusing on the key moments and looking deep into his characters. As work proceeded the angle changed, the plot structure changed, and so did the style and tone of the novel.

Unlike Grossman's novel *For the Right Cause*, Simonov's novel does not have historical descriptions of events or rambling digressions, although there is a publicistic element in the narrative. The writer dispenses with the "family nest" principle in structuring the novel. He is interested above all in the characters directly involved in the war. It is the active people who command his attention. The description of events in the novel is usually marked by an immediacy of the characters' perception and derives its emotional colour from these perceptions. The style of the novel is emotional, tense, and jerky, just like the feelings of a participant in the battle and of the author, who sympathises with the heroes.

The plot develops at an erratic pace in accordance with the dynamic and unusual events which bring twists and turns and tragic collisions to the lives of the characters. From the flow of events the author snatches out the key episodes and situations which form the focus of all the plot lines, bring together different lives and contain the makings and resolutions of new events. The characters are shown in close-up and essential features are revealed. Such interweaving of destinies and events forms hubs and key links, as it were, in the narrative which help bring out the main message of the work. Such crucial events in *The Living and the Dead* are the death of the airman Kozyrev, the story of Serpilin's regiment, Sintsov's meeting with the tankmen Ivanov and Klimovich, the story of five artillery men who have been retreating all the way from Brest, the Moscow volunteer units, the figure of Malinin, the battle at the brick factory, and the offensive battles near Moscow in December 1941. By concentrating on crucial moments the writer is able to describe the main aspects of the war fully and from many sides. Events are not narrated in isolation but are seen in their interconnection. That enables the writer to trace them to their sources, and see the dialectic of their development. Such an approach gives greater room for making the portrayal of events and characters expressive of more general ideas, and also for selecting material and commenting on the past war. By the same token, there are greater demands to historical precision, and the depth and well-rounded portrayal of the war and the characters.

The best parts of Simonov's novel have a fullness in the depicting of characters and events owing to the dialectical depth in interpreting the characteristic phenomena of the war. A retrospective historical approach enables the author to portray events in all their contradictions without risk of being one-sided. The conflicting emotions of the characters are also portrayed with the same degree of integrity and vividness. Simonov makes his attitude known. His point of view is clear. He feels anger and joy along with his characters. Thus the central scenes in Simonov's novels are invested with great general meaning expressing characteristic phenomena in a concentrated form.

Why does the death of airman Kozyrev produce such an impact on us? It provides the culmination point of a

certain line in the novel, a characteristic episode reflecting a certain social phenomenon. That is why the writer pays so much attention to that episode and describes it in vivid colours.

The reader can readily visualise the picture of the battle and the behaviour of Kozyrev. The colours are applied in vivid contrasts. Kozyrev's bitter thoughts about his life as he lies dying are conveyed with poignancy. He is severely self-critical, as strong and upright individuals are apt to be. The psychologism is profoundly dynamic, carrying individual as well as larger social significance. The author looks back on Kozyrev's heroic past, his experience in the Spanish Civil War, and his unexpected promotion. And the author goes on to pinpoint the cause of Kozyrev's tragedy which has relevance not only for his own life:

"Now, face to face with death, he had no one to lie to. He had been incapable of commanding anyone, apart from himself and his squadron, and he had become nominally a general while still actually remaining a senior lieutenant. This had been proved from the very first day of the war in the most appalling fashion, and not only in his own case. Lightning promotions like his had been the reward for irreproachable bravery and medals won at bloody cost; but, however it may have been with the others, he hadn't possessed—and his general's stars had not brought with them—the ability to command thousands of men and hundreds of aircraft.

"Half-dead, shattered in body, lying on the ground and too weak to move, he became aware, for the first time in the last few hectic years, of the full tragedy of what had happened to him and the full extent of his involuntary guilt as a man who had rapidly climbed the difficult ladder of army promotion without once looking back."

The writer focuses attention on the main features of his character. Simonov evokes our compassion for that man, who is strong and steadfast in his own way.

Thus a balanced picture is achieved. Kozyrev's death throws light on the overall situation of the retreat of the Soviet Army. It goes a long way to answer the complex question that the reader must be asking: why did it happen that the Soviet Army had to retreat in the first days of the war?

Simonov preserves a dialectical approach in answering

that complex question. He describes truthfully how the retreat took place, and what sorrows, disappointments and tragedies befell Soviet people in the early days of the war. But he steers clear of one-sidedness. Against the grim overall picture of those days the writer singles out some striking episodes and figures which make us aware of the mounting resistance put up by the Soviet Army. Initially these are but "little islands" in the general picture, but these islands grow and eventually appear as the central episodes which show the strength of the Soviet Army. That is why the episodes with Captain Ivanov, tankman Klimovich, and Kovalchuk, who saved the division banner, the five artillery men who fought their way over 400 kilometres through the German lines—all these episodes take on great significance to become emotional centres reflecting the main idea of the book.

In strict accordance with reality, Simonov in his novel *The Living and the Dead* shows that in the complex and tragic conditions of retreat the Soviet Army was storing up experience, was steeling itself, and that the future victory was being forged in the course of fierce battles. The battle of Moscow is a focus of *The Living and the Dead*. It marks the growing inner strength which was later to be tested in the battlefields. This dynamic force, a spring compressed to the limit, was bound to uncoil. It uncoiled and struck at the enemy. This is the underlying pattern of *The Living and the Dead*.

In the battle scenes—the battle at the brick factory and the defeat of the Germans near Moscow—Simonov shows the rank-and-file soldiers, the heroic volunteers and gives a graphic portrait of Commissar Malinin. Here the writer draws on his experience of the story *Days and Nights*. He shows that heroism is what is being done day by day. The focus on the heroism of Soviet people lends a ring of truth to the novel narrated by an eyewitness of events which shows the growing confidence of the characters that the enemy can be defeated.

Unlike the story *Days and Nights* the novel *The Living and the Dead* brings greater depth to the description of the feelings of the characters; they are more individual in their thoughts and actions which have greater scope.

In his next novel, *Soldiers Are Not Born*, Simonov's realism is even stronger and the portrayal of events and characters assumes even greater depth and volume. The

writer shows the Stalingrad Battle, with all its complexities and stark reality, as a turning point in the war.

In Simonov's novels, most of the limelight is given to the positive heroes who take an active attitude towards circumstances. Simonov was always attracted by characters all of a piece. His main concern is to show how the hero displays positive qualities when caught up in difficult situations and how these qualities help him in adversity. The heroes sometimes act in situations of extreme stress.

The writer tries to reveal the dialectic of the inner upheavals and emotions of his positive heroes. Awareness of the difficulties and determination to commit all the strength, intelligence, and will to overcoming them is a common denominator in the description of the heroes and in paying tribute to their courage and integrity. This is true of the portraits of Serpilin, Pikin, Levashev, Ivan Alexeyevich, Tanya Ovsyannikova, Malinin, and Sintsov.

Many critics attribute the truthfulness of Simonov's novels to his stark portrayal of the tragic sides of war, the shortcomings and contradictions. Granted, all that can be found in Simonov's novels. But that is only one side of Simonov's realism. Another and more important aspect is that the writer does not confine himself to the tragic aspects of the war, to shortcomings, errors, and contradictions, he seeks to give an all-round picture of complex phenomena. As will be seen later on the author is sometimes too preoccupied with the negative sides. But in his account of the Battle of Stalingrad, which is pivotal for the novel, Simonov is true to the logic of history. Such an approach enables him to keep a proper perspective, a sense of history, whatever the vicissitudes and conflicts in which his characters are caught up. The writer tries to show the great change that occurs in the course of the war due to the heroic efforts of the Soviet Army and the people near Stalingrad. That change is painful, claiming its victims and abounding in tragic situations in which conflicting forces clash. But change comes inexorably, revealing the inherent might of the socialist system.

The inner contradictions in Simonov's novels are subordinate to the main event. The author looks at events through the eyes of the participants in the Stalingrad Battle who are deeply involved in all the ups and downs of the struggle, including the internal contradictions. The victo-

rious developments on the main front of the struggle propel the story and are a reference point in the description of characters and relations among them. The author proceeds from the positive in his assessment of the negative phenomena. That enables him to probe boldly into the tragic contradictions and to show the high passions. He knows that strong people need not fear any trials. And this brings up to the contribution which Simonov's novels made to Soviet literature. They reflect a deeper and historically valid idea about the way Soviet people met the trial of the war.

Take, for example, Simonov's favourite hero, Serpilin. The author describes in detail the hero's feelings, the perilous situations and contradictions in which he is involved. In the end, however, the character comes out vivid and all of a piece. Serpilin evolves in the face of challenges. As the story unfolds, the character of Serpilin grows on us. Simonov shows how the positive traits of Serpilin increase. Serpilin's initiatives find support among the best people who rally round him to overcome the hardship and fight their way to victory.

Serpilin becomes even more of a social type in Simonov's next novel, *Soldiers Are Not Born*. He is drawn with still greater impact. Serpilin's talent and strong will are displayed more dramatically. He embodies the best features of our military commanders during the Stalingrad Battle. This is not to say that Serpilin is no longer haunted by conflicting emotions and no longer encounters difficulties. On the contrary, the situations in which Serpilin finds himself in *Soldiers Are Not Born* are, if anything, as dramatic as in the first novel. New trials befall him (the death of his wife and then of his son, his worries about the fate of his friend, brigade commander Grinko, and his clash with the army commander Batyuk). But there is no feeling of injustice or doom. The new knocks of fate are, first, of a different nature compared with the first novel and, second, they reveal the extraordinary strength of Serpilin, who embodies the positive sides of our life. Historical truth is on Serpilin's side. Serpilin actively overcomes obstacles. People as strong and courageous as he is act in concert with him.

One must admit that Simonov does not always proceed from the positive when describing dramatic situations and confrontations. This detracts from the integrity of some of his characters. This is what happened with the character of

Sintsov in *The Living and the Dead* because the theme of trust was not handled convincingly or correctly enough. Thus, a gulf appeared between a typical character and typical circumstances.

At a certain point in the first novel Sintsov, conceived as a strong man with a rich inner world, loses the qualities which he had acquired and revealed in the dangerous situations at the front. Instead of acting with conviction and resolution, he begins to reflect and agonise over the mistrust which had been shown towards him. The overall drama of events and Sintsov's emotions—in spite of the author's labouring of the character's reflections—was weakened and the impact of the character narrowed. The pace of the novel slowed down and the character's ambitions were dogged by his search for his role in the battle and his eagerness to prove his right to be among the defenders of Moscow.

But already in the picture of the battle at the brick factory where Sintsov displays prowess and courage, Simonov achieves a balance between characterisation and personal experiences, on the one hand, and the description of a key event in the defence of Moscow, on the other. That principle is more consistently followed in *Soldiers Are Not Born*, which makes Sintsov a more integral and typical hero.

Sintsov's mettle is manifested when he takes part in an important battle (seizure of the key positions and the linkup of the Soviet troops with the defenders of Stalingrad).

The thoughts and feelings of Sintsov reflect the frame of mind characteristic of all Soviet people and Soviet Army men at the time. That makes Sintsov symbolise the fighting man of the Battle of Stalingrad.

Increased objectivity in describing the mentality of the people at the period is the strong side of Simonov's *Soldiers Are Not Born*. He seeks to recapture the time with historic and psychological precision, and to link description of the feelings of people with that of the key episodes of the war. That enhances the artistic merit of Simonov's novel. Theoretical reasonings which from time to time punctuated the narrative in *The Living and the Dead* give way to vivid pictures and images.

Simonov's novel *Soldiers Are Not Born* has many story lines and proceeds on many levels. The action shifts from the frontline to the rear and we get an idea of the complex

historical situation and the interweaving of human destinies. Even the central event—the Soviet victory at Stalingrad—is shown from many angles. The narrative is arranged in such a way as to give us the picture of events as seen by the fighters in the battle (Sintsov, Levashev, Ilyin, Zavalishin, Tumanyan), by the Division Commander Kuzmich and Chief of Staff Pikin, the Army Chief of Staff Serpilin (who has a clear grasp of the situation at the Stalingrad Front) and, finally, as seen by the Supreme Commander of the Soviet Army, Stalin, and General Chief of Staff, Ivan Alexeyevich, who are masterminding the war operations. That enables the author to cover various aspects of particular events.

One must say that Simonov does not always achieve integrity of composition and harmony between the different strands in the narrative. Some plot lines are “a story within a story” (pictures of civilian life, the behaviour of Malinin, who is a far less vivid figure compared with the previous novel, (the story of Bastryukov’s military career). Some episodes at the headquarters and at the front are isolated, standing out of the general picture.

But when he comes to frontline episodes (the storming of a height, the liberation of Soviet prisoners of war, the joining of the Northern Don and Stalingrad fronts, and the splitting of the Paulus troops) the artist displays mature skill, an ability to draw authentic pictures and describe the heroes’ acts. The narrative, which had previously flown at a leisurely pace, now rushes headlong to its climax. That is an instance of intensification. All the previous plot lines converge at one point where the outcome of the war is being decided. The pictures are filled with great content. And the characters reveal themselves through their acts.

The changed principle of plot structure in Simonov’s novel *Soldiers Are Not Born* results in some changes in the means of typification.

To cover the phenomena in all their diversity and complexity, Simonov often resorts to contrasting parallel lines, juxtaposition, and opposition of images, plot lines and characters. The writer admitted his debt to Lev Tolstoy.

And indeed, scholars have noted that sentence structure in Simonov’s novel is reminiscent of the structures used by Lev Tolstoy when he tries to underline the contrast between a character’s feelings and acts, reveal the contradiction

between appearance and reality, contrast various psychological moods and associations—all in order to reflect the diversity of life in its dialectic movement.

Simonov made wise use of the principle of contrast and juxtaposition in his novel *The Living and the Dead*. That principle performed a variety of functions, chief of them being to reveal the contradictions and dramatise situations, and to show the characters' feelings from a certain angle. The increased dialectical perception of events and more comprehensive and many-sided description of these events in Simonov's novels led him to rely more on contrasting comparisons and parallels and juxtapositions. In *Soldiers Are Not Born* that method is so prevalent as to determine the main features of the style. Following the inner logic of action Simonov lays greater emphasis on the growing might of the Soviet Army, pointing out the change in the general mood of the characters which reflected their increased military skill and confidence of victory. Juxtapositions and parallels acquire a new meaning compared with *The Living and the Dead*.

Soldiers Are Not Born emphasises the turn in the course of the war by contrasting pictures of the Soviet Army's retreat in the summer and its later offensive battles. While the battles are still fierce and the Germans are offering stiff resistance, the general mood, the inspiration, and confidence contribute to a new atmosphere of the triumph of the right cause. The tragic situation at the front, which imparted a feeling of foreboding to *The Living and the Dead*, is now gone as a result of new developments.

Not that Simonov blinks the hardship of war. Far from it. Again and again he emphasises the difficulties and tragic sides of war with scrupulous precision. He shows the valour of the Soviet people who perform their duty to the last. The victorious march of the troops and the deaths of Soviet people create a stark contrast of colours, moods, and emotions. Simonov achieves high tragedy in describing the death of Commissar Levashev at a moment when the battle at his section seems to be over. A remarkable man—a man of great integrity, “the soul of the regiment” has died, and the sorrow of the soldiers is poignantly conveyed by showing how the dead man's orderly, Feoktistov, keeps adjusting the hat on his former commander's head unable to grasp that Levashev is dead.

Simonov frequently contrasts the austere realities of war with its accidents and unexpected twists and turns with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviour of men. That enhances the authentic effect of the picture of the war. The war appears as exacting and dangerous work. And that enhances the truthfulness in the description of the characters' emotions. The focus is not on the everyday life at war, the hard conditions, and the tragic accidents but on the characters' emotions and thoughts. If it is a positive character the contrast between the situation and his feelings highlights the sterling moral qualities and spiritual grandeur of the Soviet man. This is how the feelings of Ilyin, Zavalishin, and Sintsov are described during battle. Contrasting juxtapositions and oppositions between the external world and the inner state of the characters in Simonov's novel carry an additional message. One is constantly aware of the ready response of the Soviet people to kindness and justice, of their rich emotional world, their consideration towards each other which points up the cruelty of war and the suffering imposed on people by the nazis.

Suffice it to recall the pictures of the liberation of Soviet prisoners of war. "The little doctor", Tanya Ovsyannikova, behaves as a real hero, in her unassuming way, when saving Soviet prisoners of war she passes through the circles of Dante's inferno. The pictures of nazi atrocities in consigning Soviet POWs to death by starvation are evoked by Simonov with harrowing impact. Only someone with first-hand experience of the war could have described it in that way. Everything about that episode is striking, but especially Sintsov's meeting with his friend Butusov whom he believed to be dead. Sintsov could not recognise Butusov, with whom he had fought together at Stalingrad in that wreck of a man among Soviet prisoners of war. The scene provokes hatred for the nazis and stresses the humane liberatory character of the Great Patriotic War and the humane meaning of the Battle of Stalingrad.

Simonov uses contrasts to uplift the character of Tanya Ovsyannikova, to show her humaneness and sense of duty. For example, Tanya was charged with evacuating German prisoners, many of whom were sick and frost-bitten, and to give them first aid. That unlooses a storm of conflicting emotions in Tanya's heart. She hates the nazis, having seen their brutal behaviour while she was a partisan. And she has

to overcome her disgust for the nazis and give them medical help. The contrasting of these facts, without detracting from the impact of the exposure of the wicked enemy, highlights the lofty qualities of the Soviet man and the nature of Soviet humanism.

Simonov also uses contrasts to describe opposite types of people. That method is most successful when Simonov sets these contrasts against a broad background to reveal characteristic trends. This is the approach to the character of Batyuk who is opposed to Serpilin, Zakharov, Berezhnoi, and Kuzmich. Batyuk's character is graphically drawn. His personal qualities—domineering manner, intolerance, and rudeness—highlight Batyuk's faults as a military commander who is unable to grasp the situation in its complexity and make imaginative decisions and conduct modern warfare. Batyuk is reminiscent of Gorlov from Alexander Korneichuk's play *Front*. Simonov at times dramatises the situation in showing the clashes between the positive characters and Batyuk. In this way he underlines Batyuk's negative features and at the same time reveals the positive features of the people who stand up to Batyuk. In giving a vivid portrait of a wilful commander who has become so "ossified" that people are "bruised" when they bump into him, Simonov reveals a phenomenon of considerable general importance. He shows this phenomenon as something alien to the communist understanding of duty and human behaviour. In reality it was a different idea of military duty and human behaviour, typified by Kuzmich, Zakharov, Pikin, Berezhnoi, and Serpilin—that prevailed and was the main moral, intellectual and political force in the army.

However, Simonov does not always combine generalised description of a negative type of hero and his personal individual qualities with the degree of dialectical unity observed in the case of Batyuk. When he fails to do that characters lack individuality and become abstract types. An example is offered by Bastryukov, an out-and-out villain. He is a career-seeker, a coward, and a traitor. One marvels how such people can exist. Our sympathies are entirely on the side of Levashev who hurls these words at Bastryukov. But the description of Bastryukov is all black and his behaviour is too undisguised. He is obviously lacking some of the qualities of a skilful demagogue, a time server, a wheeler-dealer. So apart from a general impression of

wickedness the reader does not learn much about Bastryukov as an individuality expressive of a typical phenomenon. And the story line associated with Bastryukov, as we have pointed out, "sticks out" in the general composition of the novel. It is a kind of inserted story.

In general, one must say that Simonov achieves the greatest impact in describing his negative and positive characters when he shows them in action at critical moments, revealing their essence as two opposite types of human behaviour. Why does the contrast between Sintsov and Lyusin produce such an impression on the reader? The answer is that the contrast manifests itself in a very concrete and dramatic situation which gives us an X-ray, as it were, of the individual qualities of the characters and their opposing ideas of duty and human behaviour. Even if we did not know anything about Lyusin and Sintsov, their relations, and the treacherous behaviour of Lyusin who had left Sintsov in the lurch, a single picture, a single episode—in which Sintsov saves the orderly Vanya who was caught in murderous German fire because of Lyusin's dereliction of duty and neglect of his men—even that one episode would have been enough to reveal these two people as antipodes with the full impact of genuine art. Such contrasts help to reveal opposite phenomena of life in all their austere truth and dialectical complexity.

The author's portrayal of the military operations in *Soldiers Are Not Born* also marks a higher level of historicity and increased epic cope of the novel. Simonov is undeterred by the complexities of the strategy of war. By drawing a gallery of portraits of the members of the Supreme Command he includes these problems in the texture of his work, shows the clashes of opinions, and various points of view on diverse questions, especially the central question of the novel: whether one should or should not mount an immediate all-out effort to destroy the German troops surrounded near Stalingrad. All the different lines in the story dealing with the military operations are subordinate to that main problem. Apart from the military aspect it has a human aspect linked with the question of the commander's responsibility for the lives of his men. It is an important problem and by raising it the author manages to bring together disparate episodes by providing a unifying concept.

In Simonov's novel, the solution of the central question

highlights two opposing views on warfare. The Supreme Command planned to defeat the German troops surrounded near Stalingrad within a week. But the Chief of Staff Ivan Alexeyevich advocated another plan. He wanted to use the attrition tactics with regard to the encircled Paulus troops until the Germans either "starved to death" or surrendered. That would have taken a relatively small Russian force and in the meantime a larger force could have been built up for a new offensive. And then the operation to destroy the surrounded German troops could have been carried out with less loss of life.

Army Commander Batyuk is all for an immediate all-out attack, whatever the human loss on the Russian side.

Serpilin wavers. Initially he is inclined to favour the plan of Ivan Alexeyevich, but seeing how eager his soldiers are to fight he begins to favour an immediate attack and uses all his skill to organise it. The scenes of the liberation of prisoners of war consigned to death by starvation in Nazi prison camps—pictures drawn with shattering truthfulness—convince us of the need for an immediate attack and justify the impatience of the Soviet soldiers who are anxious to "settle accounts with the Germans".

And yet; when the troops of Paulus have been split into two parts—the southern and the northern, and when the Soviet troops have linked up with the defenders of Stalingrad, Serpilin and Kuzmich, the wiser of the military commanders, suggest that the Soviet troops should not push on too hard to be spared unnecessary losses due to the continued resistance of the enemy.

Simonov leaves open the question as to whether an immediate attack to destroy the German troops surrounded near Stalingrad was the right solution.

Simonov seeks to be objective, tries to show events in their evolution and the struggle of contradictions, the way they actually happened. At the same time, in retrospect he is aware that there were alternative ways of defeating and destroying the Paulus troops near Stalingrad.

Scrupulously objective, Simonov underlines that the Stalingrad operation took much more time and effort than the General Headquarters had expected. German resistance was fierce. Besides, the General Headquarters, he suggests, made a mistake in assessing the number of encircled troops.

There were 300,000 and not 30,000 or 40,000 as initially supposed.¹

When he touches upon such complex questions as forecasts of military operations, Simonov does not pass final judgement. It is furthest from his thoughts to "revise" history. Simply he believes that the writer cannot confine himself to showing how an event took place. It is also his duty to recreate the atmosphere of the time, the actions of the characters, clashes of their opinions, and their diverse attitudes towards events. Without it, it would have been impossible to describe the persons involved in a historical event.

It may be interesting to recall that Lenin, referring to historical experience, notably military experience (for example, the Japanese siege of Port Arthur) urged to look deep into the objective and subjective factors which prompted the actions of the belligerents, including military tactics. In that, as in all other things, he advised to use practice as the measure of truth.

Citing the experience of the Japanese storm of Port Arthur, Lenin pointed out: "...It is easy to understand that in solving a problem in which there are very many unknown factors, it is difficult without the necessary practical experience to determine with absolute certainty the mode of operation to be adopted against the enemy fortress, or even to make a fair approximation of it. It was impossible to determine this without ascertaining in practice the strength of the fortress, the strength of its fortifications, the state of its garrison, etc. Without this it was impossible for even the best of commanders, such as General Nogi undoubtedly was, to decide what tactics to adopt to capture the fortress. On the other hand, the successful conclusion of the war called for the speediest possible solution of the problem. Furthermore, it was highly probable that even

¹ In May 1970, I asked Army General Shtemenko: "Can you comment on the fact that Simonov in his novel *Soldiers Are Not Born* has one of his characters declare that the General Headquarters initially made a mistake in determining the number of German troops surrounded near Stalingrad? As it turned out, there were not 30,000 or 40,000 but 300,000." Shtemenko replied: "We could not have misjudged the strength of the surrounded Paulus grouping by ten times. Apart from data supplied by reconnaissance, there is a host of indirect signs from which you can always estimate the number of enemy troops fighting on a particular front. Military experts know that very well."

very heavy losses, if they were inevitable in the process of capturing the fortress by direct assault, would have been more than compensated for by the result".¹

Lenin never opposed "what is" to "what should be". He was concerned to identify the laws of history which determine its objective course. And proceeding on that he discovered what might have been in what actually took place—the experience of history which determined the course of events. In doing so, he revealed his amazing gift for assessing phenomena in close connection with the whole course of history.

Speaking about the Japanese army's storm of Port Arthur, he said: "If we examine the course of the military operations as a whole and the conditions under which the Japanese army operated, we must come to the conclusion that these assaults on Port Arthur were not only a display of supreme heroism on the part of the army which proved capable of enduring such huge losses, but that they were the only possible tactics that could have been adopted under the conditions then prevailing, i.e., at the opening of hostilities. Hence, these tactics were necessary and useful; for without a test of strength by the practical attempt to carry the fortress by assault, without testing the enemy's power of resistance, there would have been no grounds for adopting the more prolonged and arduous method of struggle, which, by the very fact that it was prolonged, harboured a number of other dangers."²

Both the strong and the weak points of Simonov's assessment of the Stalingrad operation were revealed at the end of the novel *Soldiers Are Not Born*. Speaking about the novel as a whole, one must say that the writer succeeds in recreating the panorama and showing the defeat of the Paulus grouping in all the complexity and from many angles. There is stark objectivity about the pictures of combat operations and the descriptions of the behaviour of the heroes—from the Front Chief of Staff Serpilin to Battalion Commander Sintsov. Simonov does not indulge in publicistic speculations and does not violate historical truth. But in discussing the question as to whether an immediate effort should have been mounted to destroy the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 85.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

Paulus Army and in describing different opinions on that matter (the representative of the General Headquarters and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the generals and even battalion commanders) Simonov largely confines himself to recording the contradictions without interpreting them. And that is not enough in an epic canvas.

Lev Tolstoy in his time pointed out that in an epic novel the writer expresses mainly the positive forces of history. The pioneering experience of the Soviet epic novel lies mainly in its portrayal of the forward march of history and the role which the masses play in it. Undoubtedly the main merit of Simonov's novels is the description of the growing strength of the Soviet Army and the socialist system, the enormous potentialities of the Soviet Land and the Soviet man manifested in the war.

That accounts for the emotionalism of Simonov's work and the optimistic message of the fast-paced narrative.

The question of an individual's responsibility before history is also raised sharply elsewhere in the novel. That question has many sides to it. It is an undoubted merit of Simonov's novel that he links the question of personal responsibility before history with moral problems. That enabled him to describe various types of human behaviour, to glorify those who embodied truly humane qualities, and condemn those who were not worthy of being called human beings.

A very complex question is that of the tragic guilt of an individual before history. The history of art shows that it cannot be tackled on the level of morals alone without a thorough analysis of the social conditions which determined the individual's behaviour.

Marx and Engels used to say that it takes for the colours of a Rembrandt to highlight the contradictions of an epoch as expressed in a single individual.

One must admit that Simonov comes within reach of solving that problem. Some of his images and pictures have drama and emotional impact (the fate of corps commander Grinko, Serpilin's conflict with his son, the death of Serpilin's wife, and his meeting with Stalin). In creating these emotion-charged images and pictures which mark high points in the development of the plot, Simonov was striving to tell the whole truth about the real contradictions of life. However, they have about them a sense of tragedy and are

replete with irreconcilable contradictions.

The artist is of course entitled to follow his inclination and depict his time as he sees it. However, there must be, in the final analysis, a completeness and clarity about his system of images and his portrayal must be in line with the logic of history. I feel that *Soldiers Are Not Born* falls short of such clarity and completeness in the concluding chapters. The author fails to deliver a final chord that would bring together all the dramatic lines and project them into the future. One can discern outlines of a new story in the meeting between Sintsov and Serpilin. The chapter about Serpilin's meeting with Stalin has about it the tragic breath of history.

The novel *The Last Summer*, which concludes Simonov's trilogy *The Living and the Dead*, reveals an increased concern with depicting events on many levels and recording the interconnection of disparate forces in life.

In *The Last Summer*, the battle scenes, and the great battle of the Soviet Army to defeat the enemy on the Central Front in the summer of 1944 are powerful, artistically impressive and marked by epic sweep and grasp of the essence of events and the motives of the characters.

There are grounds for saying that *The Last Summer* represents an advance in Simonov's skill both in describing events and the characters taking part in the battle. The course of events is related with historical accuracy and breadth, as befits an epic novel. Simonov describes circumstances in precise historical detail. He writes about the two months of preparation for the breakthrough of the front where Serpilin's army is located, the strategic plan to surround Mogilev and to advance further on Minsk, quoting the figures about the strength of different troops taking part in the battle. Serpilin commands an army of 98,992 men. And it has supporting it some three thousand guns and mortars, 300 tanks and self-propelled guns. There is a mobile strike group attached to the army. All these troops and hardware are committed on a 14-kilometre section of the front. Simonov stresses that Serpilin's army is engaged in a supporting action. It is not the spearhead of the breakthrough.

The main task of breaking through to Minsk and Vilnius to liberate Byelorussia and Lithuania is to be carried out by other units. There is an artistic significance about the choice

of the object of description, the circumstances of Serpilin's army in *The Last Summer*. It results in contrasting parallel pictures making the reader aware of the increased might of the Soviet Army. If such forces and such heavily armed troops are committed on a secondary section of the front one can infer that on the main section there are even better equipped and more powerful forces which have motorised and armoured units capable of tackling major strategic tasks.

The Last Summer reveals Simonov's improved skill in describing the run of battle. The reader becomes a participant in the event, and sees the grown might of the Soviet Army, the improved military skill of the Soviet command, the offensive tactics, the interaction of the units during the breakthrough, the encirclement of Mogilev, and further offensive which involves the crossing of four rivers, including the Dnieper and the Berezina. Simonov emphasises the fierceness of the battle, tells briefly about the actions and plans of the enemy (replacement of the commander of the "Centre" group, Fieldmarshal Busch, by Fieldmarshal Model), and gives some vivid sketches of the German invaders—fanatics determined to fight to the end. One can see from the novel that the battle of 1944, the defeat of the German troops on the Central Front and the liberation of Byelorussia was larger in scope than the Battle of Stalin-grad and involved the use of greater fire power.

The writer does not only state it all: he picks out the most vivid moments, which adds to typification. Thus, in the operation of the encirclement of Mogilev and its liberation the author singles out for detailed description (after giving the general picture of the offensive of the Serpilin army) the battle against enemy troops who have made a desperate attempt to break out of encirclement by following the Mogilev-Bobruisk highway. Tank units, artillery, and infantry take part in the battle on either side. Simonov draws a memorable image of tank unit commander, Colonel Galchonok. Commander of the infantry regiment Ilyin also distinguishes himself in that battle. The Soviet airplanes strafe the enemy. Simonov shows the strategic plan of the Soviet commanders which is to draw the enemy into battle, lure him into an ambush, and then destroy by fire power. The reader gets a tangible picture of the ebb and flow of the battle (from the moment a German tank and self-propelled gun strike force launches a breakthrough attempt until its

defeat), the behaviour of the commanders and the tension of the battle. The reader is aware of the might and superiority of the Soviet troops. Simonov meets the greatest challenge facing a writer who describes battles: he conveys the atmosphere. And so the detailed description of the battle becomes a typical picture which expresses in microcosm the new features of the war.

Briefing his tankmen, Serpilin says: "Here at Mogilev we'll pay the Germans in kind for 1941. And not only in kind but many times over." "Don't let a single 'Ferdinand', a single vehicle or a single gun out of Mogilev. No one and nothing!" And this is how things turn out in the end. The German occupiers, who have about two divisions, several units of self-propelled guns and powerful artillery in Mogilev are unable to break out. War is portrayed with stark realism. But the events are illumined by the light of the great idea, the defence of one's country. The nazis deserve the retribution administered to them. And comparison with 1941 enhances the significance of the events taking place. The impact of concrete description in Simonov's novel is magnified by the general idea of the book, one is always aware of the general things behind the concrete things, of the great historical episode in which the characters are involved and to which they commit all they have.

In terms of battle description and the ability to convey the general through the concrete one must single out the engagement fought by Ilyin's regiment with the German troops encircled to the east of Minsk. One feels how the ring round the enemy's large army is being compressed and how the enemy, reeling from the heavy blows of the Soviet troops, is desperately trying to break out. We see the final stage of the battle, the last furious effort of the enemy. The battle takes place on a clearing in the forest. Ilyin, exhausted after endless battles but radiant with expectation of victory and charged with energy, is warned by reconnaissance that a group of Germans, about a thousand men with tanks and self-propelled guns, is heading towards his regiment. Four lines of the enemy machine-gunners emerge from the forest, supported by three "Ferdinands" and two tanks. Ilyin conducts the battle with gusto, the Soviet commanders act with skill, and the Germans perish under Soviet fire. The senseless fanaticism of the Germans is underlined by the reaction of the German anti-fascist from

"Free Germany" who was calling the enemies to surrender. "Idioten," —this is how he comments on the actions of the German commanders.

In a cinematic fashion, Simonov combines panoramic description of the general state of the front with closeups of sections of the battle. A single battle shown at close range and in detail acquires typical features. The fierce battle waged by Ilyin's regiment seals the fate of the encircled German troops. They are trapped and are forced to capitulate. And the defeat of a large enemy grouping encircled to the east of Minsk in turn climaxes the liberation of Byelorussia. One stage of the war ends and another stage, the breakthrough to Eastern Prussia, begins.

The Last Summer undoubtedly reveals Simonov's increased skill in achieving a unity between the description of events and the experiences of the characters, who are caught up in complex and contradictory situations and are prey to conflicting emotions and thoughts.

Simonov casts moral problems in an even more poignant form than in the previous novels (the question of honesty, conscience, and the value of an individual). He is not inclined to solve them in a one-sided way. He understands that morality depends on the historical circumstances and the concrete situation, and his description of the characters depends on how they understand their duty, and their personal role in the contradictory events. *The Last Summer* shows Serpilin emerge as a major military commander, as a man completely honest with himself and other people. Serpilin is a successful attempt to create an image of Soviet commander who has vision and is capable of tackling complex military questions and resolving life's problems.

Serpilin's antipode in *The Last Summer* is Lvov, member of the front's Military Council. It is not only that their ideas of their duty diverge. It is a measure of Simonov's skill that he makes Lvov a flesh-and-blood character, a man of strong will and resolution, devoted to his cause. But the writer chooses such an angle, such a balance of the individual and the general as to show how Lvov's negative features suddenly come to the surface at the new stage of the war. People have matured and their military skill improved, while Lvov has remained at the level of the Civil War. He has no grasp of the new conditions. And in this way even Lvov's positive features become negative. His rigorous loyalty to principle

makes him suspicious of people. His personal bravery comes out as recklessness and neglect of human lives. Lvov has a mistaken idea about the importance of political work in the army. The description of Lvov highlights Simonov's dialectical approach to the inner world of his characters and the contradictions of life.

The character of Batyuk undergoes a striking transformation in *The Last Summer*. Simonov tries to show the evolution of Batyuk by immersing him in events and describing how the advance of history influences the individual. At the new stage of the war Batyuk, who is now commander of the front, reveals military skill ("He has learnt much during the war," says Serpilin), is able to act according to circumstances, and can tackle major military operations. Although his actions still show him to be a man of overweening ambition he no longer has the "wooden" edges which bruise people who deal with him. He now takes into account the opinions of other people. Sometimes he still acts on an impulse, unable to control his temper, but he quickly checks himself, heeds the opinion of Serpilin and acts in the common interest. He is more humane and fair-dealing than in the earlier novels.

At times Batyuk's transformation seems too striking. It is not sufficiently explained, especially if one remembers that in *Soldiers Are Not Born* Batyuk was a negative type of military commander similar to Gorlov in Korneichuk's *Front*. In *Soldiers Are Not Born* it was impressed upon the reader that Batyuk, in addition to being domineering to an irrational degree, is incompetent as a soldier, has no knowledge of the latest military technology, and no combat skill. How could such a striking transformation have taken place? How did he acquire all the positive features? All that is a matter of conjecture. The reader may, of course, suppose that while he was deputy commander of the Northern Front, Batyuk reappraised his actions and learnt a great deal, to become a different man.

In describing the strategy of war, Simonov does not have his characters argue about alternative ways of conducting major operations. Undoubtedly in portraying the new stage of the war in *The Last Summer* Simonov displays a dialectical and comprehensive approach to history. The decisive factor is the victorious offensive of the Soviet Army which is his main subject in this novel. Simonov achieves artistic

completeness and precision in describing military events. They are seen developing according to their inherent logic and are interpreted by the author in the context of history.

This does not mean a decline in Simonov's realism nor does it mean that the author avoids showing contradictions and tragic sides of war. On the contrary. The realism of Simonov's novel grows stronger and the tragic sides of war are shown as inevitable consequences of the furious battles in which, apart from the necessity to sacrifice human life and to risk, there are the unpredictable laws of accident and concatenations of circumstances. The tragic sides of war are artistically portrayed. And that highlights the heroism of the Soviet people, arouses compassion for accidental deaths, and produces a powerful impact on the reader's emotions. A kind of cathartic effect results. The writer shows graphically the dear price Soviet people had to pay for victory. This is how the accidental death of Serpilin, the central figure of the trilogy, is interpreted.

Replying to numerous letters from the readers who were unhappy that Serpilin did not live to see the victory, Simonov had this to say in the journal *Voprosy Literatury*:

"I had long made up my mind that Serpilin would die in my novel. At any rate, I had no doubt that Serpilin would die when I started on *The Last Summer* and described Serpilin's late love. In fact, the title *The Last Summer* has been suggested to some extent by Serpilin's death.

"I have referred to the reasons that led me to do so many times. In order to express poetically what the death of twenty million people meant, to people each of whom was the dearest man for several survivors, in order to express the depth of that tragedy I had to show the death of a man whom I cherish most in the novel. Then it will be brought home to the reader what tremendous loss war visits on us...

"As regards my decision to end the novel in 1944, it occurred to me when I decided to end the trilogy at the place where it started. People who lived through the harrowing experiences of 1941 returned to the same place as victors. Apart from anything else, it was a way of giving the book a 'circular' pattern and link together all the three volumes. The theme of return and liberation later entered a number of episodes and chapters in *The Last Summer* which created a sense of a complete novel and sustained narrative."

And indeed, the description of the battle of Mogilev in which Soviet troops are commanded by Serpilin and the breakthrough to Berezina River by Kalashnikov's corps pushing towards Minsk—all these episodes are replete with harkbacks to 1941, the tragic and heroic episodes of retreat described in *The Living and the Dead*, the first part of the trilogy. Serpilin and Sintsov in *The Last Summer* pass through the places where they used to engage the enemy in mortal battle in 1941. Only the picture now, to use Serpilin's phrase, is reversed: in 1941 we were retreating and suffering defeat, now we are advancing and beating the enemy. That suggests a historical contrast which enables the author to emphasise the drastic change in the run of war and give the trilogy a structural completeness.

However, as the concluding novel in the trilogy *The Last Summer* is not without drawbacks. While the battles are described in vivid detail, the novel lacks somewhat in coherence of genre. Briefly, one must recall that the author at the start of his trilogy rejected the principle of "family nests" (as followed by Grossman in his novel *For the Right Cause*) and wrote an article in the press arguing that the modern novel must be a "novel of events" rather than a "novel of destiny". From the point of view of the literary scholar he raised a very complex problem which has to do with the unity of typical circumstances and typical characters. The specific genre of the novel depends on how the artist goes about achieving that unity. Simonov's statement in the press provoked a lively polemic among critics. Later Simonov admitted that in the heat of the polemic about the innovatory nature of the contemporary novel he sharpened the question unduly by opposing two principles which in fact are not mutually exclusive and have equal *raison d'être*. In his novel *The Last Summer* he honours both these principles. But at the beginning of the novel he pays too much attention to the family problems of the characters. One cannot help feeling that some scenes are redundant (Serpilin's meeting with the wife of Pikin who was taken prisoner by the Germans by chance, and her story about Pikin's brother Father Nikodim, and his religious affairs).

One gets the impression that Simonov is at pains to prove that a novel can be written which blends the two principles of plot structure and is at once a "novel of destiny" and a "novel of events". That, however, proved a tall order

indeed. Simonov in his "novel of destiny" approach continues to champion the view that "breaking off the life stories of the characters" is an innovatory principle of the contemporary novel. In *The Last Summer* this principle is met by the relations between Sintsov and Tanya Ovsyannikova, and the sudden turn in their lives. Tanya learns that Sintsov's first wife, Masha, is almost certainly alive and she tells Sintsov about it. Simonov deliberately omits to follow up the stories of the three characters. He makes the reader identify himself with their destinies. There is room for "extra" associations in the reader's mind as to what will happen with the characters.

One must also say that the battle scenes are more skillfully drawn than the scenes of family relations. This is not to suggest that the story lines dealing with family are superfluous. They carry important ideas, are charged with emotions, and reveal important facets of the country's life giving us insights into the characters. But (perhaps due to the nature of the material) these plotlines do not form a coherent pattern in the novel.

"History is broader and richer than any book so far written about the war," said the author. And he went on to add: "It is, perhaps, precisely because history is richer and broader than anything we have written so far that I am inclined to take an optimistic view of our literature which will, undoubtedly, say much that we have not said through lack of skill, indecision, or simply because we were not prepared morally, intellectually, and psychologically to say it..." It must be said in all fairness, however, that Simonov has bequeathed to us honest and intelligent novels about the war which have become part of the treasure house of Soviet war prose.

VI

Konstantin Fedin's novel, *Conflagration*, is the third part of a large canvas. It spans the events from the stormy times of the October Revolution to 1941. The writer's ambition is to create "the image of Time" and evoke the atmosphere of the period. His novel is less saturated with descriptions of battle scenes than Grossman's *For the Right Cause* or Simonov's trilogy. Konstantin Fedin does not take excep-

tion to the principle of "family nests", but he uses that principle in a special way. The "family nests" in his novel are geared to a greater extent to the larger intellectual and aesthetic tasks, to evoking the social, psychological and intellectual atmosphere of Soviet society on the eve of and during the first year of the war.

Individual portraiture and the psychological nature of Fedin's novel are vehicles for social ideas, lending the novel a new kind of generalised authenticity.

Compared with *Early Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer*, Fedin's novel *Conflagration* expands the narrative scope by introducing new storylines and new characters. A whole new layer of life appears in the novel which concerns the life of the village of Korzhiki near Smolensk and the story of the Verigin family. The novel pays much attention to the young generation who have entered adult life (Pavel Parabukin, Alexei Pastukhov, Ivan Ragozin) or are on the threshold of adulthood (Nadya Izvekova, Zhenya Komkova, Larissa, and others). The "geography" of events is also broader than in the earlier novels, with the action shifting from Brest to Moscow, from a Smolensk village to Tula. But for all the diversity of types and sweeping narrative scope there is a centre to Fedin's novel.

The first book of the novel *Conflagration* concentrates on describing the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Fedin ties the various and far-flung storylines into a single knot. He shows how his characters receive news of the war. The first day of the war is portrayed with stereoscopic vividness. It is a focus for the various rays of life, a test of the mettle of his characters. It reveals their emotional makeup and their mentality, and the traits of their behaviour. The first day of the war is a turning point in the life of the country and in the life of every protagonist.

The Conflagration is a testimony to the author's skill in recreating the atmosphere of the time, in seeing the general behind the particular, in discerning the links between disparate phenomena and revealing the individual as the typical, to give an idea of the basic nature of the changes taking place in life. He displays consummate verbal skill to create period atmosphere. The reader seems to be transposed to the situation described and to act together with the characters. He lives through the events, thinks and grapples with problems together with the heroes. He shares

their joys and sorrows, fears and anger, and is filled with grim determination to carry on the struggle.

Take, for example, the chapters about Matvei Verigin's visit to his native village of Korzhiki. The reader is immersed in the atmosphere of rural life with its original history and nature, its graphically portrayed characters, their vernacular speech, and their behaviour and relations with one another. It is an authentic picture throbbing with life. Everything is shown as it is in everyday life but is seen from a particular angle. Through the eyes of Matvei we see the dramatic changes that had taken place in the Verigin family and in the life of the village during the Soviet period, and we see signs of further change. Imperceptibly we come to see that the life of the Verigin family and the village of Korzhiki is linked with history. The concrete is invested with general significance, and acquires a life all its own. We see the panorama of the people's life from a historical and moral angle which gives us an idea of the sources of the Russian character's strength.

The same principle is applied to describing the life of the Izvekov family in Tula, the hardship of Anna Ulina who is tossed by the war from place to place, the behaviour of the writer Pastukhov in Moscow and Yasnaya Polyana, Nadya Izvekova's meetings with her childhood friends, arguments, and quarrels between the characters. The author brings great precision to describing the situations, the speech and deportment of the characters, and their perceptions of the world around them. At the same time, all this is shown as part of a seething, whirling world, a current full of explosive passions and cataclysms of world-wide significance.

What is the secret of the rich associations produced by the novel's imagery when, as if through magic suggestion, we see the general and are aware of the outline and the changes of history?

Above all that is achieved, of course, by many-sided characterisations. Often the thoughts and feelings of the heroes—highly individual and at times fluid—are revealed in complex interaction with the feelings and thoughts of other characters, and in contrasting and compared associations. That already breathes life into the characters.

The people are shown at turning points in their lives and the life of their country. Their perception of the world and their reactions to events are sharpened, revealing their

innermost qualities. The impressions are intensified, centring around key moments. That makes for great expressiveness.

In each particular case such a keen perception of the world is motivated by circumstances and the character's mode of behaviour. The beauty of the ordinary world was brought home forcibly to Alexei Pastukhov when he realised that the war had broken the normal tempo of life. He is able to see the unusual in the usual. Nadya's increased perceptiveness of the world around her is due not only to her youth and eagerness to learn about the world, but also due to the shock she received when she learnt that her mother was in the area of hostilities and when she worried about her. The world reveals its unusual side helping flash out the characteristic in the particular.

Fedin's narrative skill is even more powerful when he comes to describing the start of the war. That event helps the writer to show the changed perceptions of the characters, their keen reaction to events and their heightened awareness of the surrounding world. And that in turn enables him to show in bolder relief the vast changes taking place in life and in the minds of the characters. A dialectic relationship exists between their feelings and thoughts and the changes in the surrounding world. That invests the novel's imagery with deep implications. The characteristic features of life are shown through the sharp perceptions of an individual, i. e., in a refracted way. The character perceives a vast phenomenon in an individual way and thus provides a kind of magic mirror in which we see life with its passions, feelings, clashes of wills, and contradictions. In a way, Fedin carries on the traditions of Lev Tolstoy. Through the dialectic of the feelings and thoughts of the characters and through their behaviour the writer seeks to show the dialectic of life, the interplay of various phenomena and factors. The destinies of the characters and their distinct features add up to a picture of the time. The book is pervaded with its atmosphere.

Depicting life in this way calls for great mastery. It calls for particular authenticity, a sense of historical and psychological truth, both in describing events, characteristic facts, and in revealing the inner world of the characters and their perceptions and behaviour. Fedin exhibits such skill because he describes everything in the light of the basic

world conflict of the time. He could not encompass all the diverse phenomena. So there are composition centres in the novel.

Initially, as we know, the focus in the novel is on the first day of the war. The writer shows the individual reactions of the characters to news about the outbreak of the war. The novel has a wide gallery of diverse types—from a regional Party secretary Novozhilov to the kulak peasant Nyrkov, from engineer Alexei Pastukhov to artist Ivan Ragozin, from Izvekov to Tsvetukhin. So the reader can see how the war changes life and draws everyone into its maelstrom making people reassess their lives and adopt a new line of behaviour. The sharp perceptions of the characters and their individual behaviour contribute to the picture of the early days of the war, recapture the atmosphere of the upheaval caused by the war. All the feelings of the characters are concentrated and intensified. As if by a magic wand, the characters are transposed into another world, a troubled, anxious and unusual world. The impressions of the characters are so intense as to be strikingly at odds with the actual temporal framework of events. It seems to be enormous although only a day or two have passed since the beginning of the war. A new time count begins. The characters act in accordance with new circumstances. Almost instantly most of the characters begin to feel and think in a new way. They develop a new consciousness which, to quote the novel, “became so completely subordinated to this new awareness that the old way of thinking gave in to it without a struggle”.¹

Thus, the dialectic of life is dramatised through the portrayal of the dialectic of the feelings and experiences of the characters.

Then a new centre of composition appears in Fedin's novel. The writer places his characters in the thick of events, exposing them to all the trials that befell the country. He shows the town of Brest and the sufferings of the refugees. The tragedy of the siege of Brest, the author writes, opened “the series of the war's tragic reverses”.² As the conflict unfolds, the epicentre of events moves closer to Korzhiki, Moscow, and Tula to form new high points in the narrative.

¹ K. Fedin, *The Conflagration*, Progress Publishers, 1968, p. 150.

² *Ibid.*, p. 558.

The sinister clouds are gathering and the danger is mounting. This realisation forces itself on each of the characters—from a teenage girl at Yasnaya Polyana who takes Pastukhov for a spy, to a flighty, opportunistic Yulia, Pastukhov's young wife. The description of the characters' behaviour is geared to the main task of the novel which is to trace the sources of the fortitude, the dogged determination, and invincible might of the Soviet nation. Fedin describes these qualities in a dialectical way. His pictures of the war are truthful, and he contrasts the behaviour of different people.

It is not accidental that Anna Ulina (Anochka) finds herself at the epicentre of events at the beginning of the war. The image of charming Anochka, bright and radiant, exuding warmth and kindness, enables the author to highlight the contrast between the two elements of life which clash in the war, and to emphasise the barbarous nature of the nazi attack. The stark pictures of the devastation of a peaceful city, death of innocent victims, children and women, and the suffering of the refugees among whom Anochka and Tsvetukhin find themselves, all these pictures carry an important message. And the image of Anochka acquires particular significance. We see how the sterling qualities of Soviet people are displayed in the face of severe trials. The graver the danger, the more complex the situation, the more we are aware of the inner strength, the goodness, and the humane feelings which motivate their behaviour. Above all, there is concern for others, mutual help. This is the feeling that marks the relations between Anochka and Tsvetukhin and the young actors from Brest and Pinsk. The business of giving help to refugees creates a new sense of unity among Soviet people. Not all rise to the occasion. Some, like the unnamed "highranking official" who is going "to make a run for his life" or the actor Skundin, think only about themselves. Konstantin Fedin turns the spotlight on them for a brief moment to expose their hideous nature. His main concern, however, is to show that "in moments of shattering grief tenderness does not vanish completely from human hearts",¹ that in the chaos of unexpected trials and tribulations the best sons of the nation display fortitude, unity, willpower, and awareness of

¹ K. Fedin, *The Conflagration*, p. 502.

their strength. This concentrated will, which opposes barbarians, has a potentially explosive force. It makes them wage a fierce and uncompromising struggle.

"Wind puts out a candle but fans a fire". That folk proverb provides an epigraph for Fedin's novel, and conveys its message. The plot development reflects the nature of the historic conflict which is a conflict of opposing forces, opposite moral, social, and human elements. There again the particular and the general merge to acquire a philosophical meaning. The destiny of an individual, his thoughts and cares reflect the destiny of the nation. The start of the war opens not only a string of tragic vicissitudes but also a saga of heroic deeds of the Soviet people.

In his novel Fedin is concerned not only to describe the life of the people but also to reveal the people's mentality, their view on events, attitude to war, and their understanding of their duty at the time of trial. Replying to the question of a German critic W. Duwel about the role of the opening "peasant chapter" in the structure of the novel, Fedin stressed: "The peasant theme is crucial for the structure of the third part of the trilogy. It will be strengthened in the second half of the novel. I have realised that it is not enough to depict the Second World War only through the prism of the consciousness of the intelligentsia. The peasant chapters in the novel introduce 'the element of the people'."

That letter explains why Fedin contrasts so sharply at the beginning of the novel the two attitudes to war—that of Pastukhov and that of Matvei Verigin—and why at the end of the first part of *The Conflagration* he shows the meeting of the Tula region Party committee to show the life of the city whose people joined the regular troops in fighting off German invaders.

The viewpoint of the people and its leaders is adopted by the author, and determines his interpretation of the war and the important role of the popular consciousness in history.

Fedin rejects the concept of fatalistic determinism of human behaviour and in his novel glorifies conscious behaviour of an individual. That is tangible proof of the historical, social, and psychological truth of Fedin's novel in the description of the conduct of the Soviet people.

Characters of young people assume great importance in the overall historical and artistic conception of Fedin's

novel. These characters are vehicles of some of the most important ideas.

The pages which describe the young are brighter and the colours are more vivid. The style acquires greater dynamism, the speech is more abrupt, expressing the shifting moods. The author tries to use speech to convey the perception of the world and the mentality of the young. That represents a new departure in Fedin's work. He gives a collective portrait of the youth through individualised types who are shown in a romantic light. The images of Nadya Izvekova, Ivan Ragozin, and Pavel Parabukin ring true to life. Each has distinct features, but they all share some qualities—moral purity, delight in doing useful work, team spirit, and self-sacrifice. Pavel Parabukin, for example, is never despirited by setbacks. He knows that life is struggle. One must stand up for one's cause. And he uses that as a touchstone as he tries to steel his character. Pavel Parabukin embodies an active attitude to life. It is a character of remarkable integrity.

Nadya Izvekova's character is also all of a piece. It is a very poetic character with one dominant feature. While conveying all the nuances of her quickly changing moods and her heady dreams Fedin shows her joy of being involved in useful work and her desire to be where she is most needed.

One cannot help noting that Nadya's depth of feeling, integrity, and clear thinking makes her a human type similar to Ulya Gromova in Fadeyev's *The Young Guard* and Polya Vikhrova in Leonov's novel *The Russian Forest*. The similarity is not fortuitous. It shows that the characters of YCL members drawn by Fadeyev, Leonov, and Fedin are typical, and reveals a common approach of these writers in interpreting life. The characters of the young in Fedin's *The Conflagration*, like those in Leonov's *The Russian Forest*, convey the vigour of new processes in life, the steady progress of socialist society.

It is not by chance that Fedin in his novel is so concerned to show the continuity of generations, the similar aspirations of Izvekov and his daughter Nadya, Ivan Ragozin and his teacher, the artist Grivnin. It is not by chance, too, that Fedin emphasises the contradictions between Pastukhov and his son. All that helps to bring out the general idea of the novel.

It is perhaps in the portrayal of the young generation that the dialectical grasp of the laws of life, a feature of a writer of socialist realism, is most pronounced. And this is

also true of the optimistic view of the course of history at tragic periods of confrontation, trial and uncertainty. Fedin challenges, through his characters, the passive and contemplative attitude towards life.

The clash of Pastukhov Jr. with his father takes on a moral and philosophical significance. Fedin opposes two views, the passive contemplative and the active transformative. And this contrast runs through the whole novel. It is not by chance that the character of Pastukhov Sr. occupies such a large place.

Fedin brings psychological flair to describing the inner upheavals of the writer Pastukhov. Pastukhov's feeling of attachment to his country is heightened during the war. However, his main thoughts are about himself. Whatever else he may be thinking about, the main object of his thoughts is himself. Pastukhov's behaviour makes it possible to liken him to Gratsiansky from *The Russian Forest* (publicity-seeking coward and egoist). Fedin shows that in the face of great danger to the nation such people are often completely at a loss and incapable of constructive action. The bottom has been struck from under Pastukhov's feet, he is debilitated and cannot find a role for himself. He perceives only the terrible consequences of war and he tries to escape them being unable to stand up to adversity or to understand the meaning of events.

This is his state of mind when he meets his son in Yasnaya Polyana (the family estate of Lev Tolstoy) in order to dip in the great past which he holds sacred and thus to fortify his faith shaken by the tragic events. He confides to his son his greatest worry—the retreat of the Soviet Army and the threat to the “heart of Russia”.

There is a measure of truth in his words, for his worries were shared by all. But can one limit oneself to that truth and do nothing to avert the danger? No is the courageous answer of Pastukhov Jr.

Fedin shows an alternative line of behaviour contrasting it with passivity and bewilderment in the face of looming danger. Alexei Pastukhov has already seen action at the front, and he is at least as aware of the gravity of the danger as his father. But he is not afraid of it. He is ready to fight the Germans to the last. And this determined man tells his father with calm conviction that this is not the time to speculate about the whys and wherefores of what had

happened and why the Soviet Army is retreating: "We must act. All together. In single formation." He has a clear grasp of things. He says that it is difficult to rally while sustaining direct blows but he is sure that it can and must be done. "...I believe in the Red Army." "We are not the kind who comes to seek solace under this tree (Tolstoy's famous tree with a wishing bell—V.N.). We are not poor folk..." "...If Tolstoy were alive he wouldn't have pilgrims and beggars waiting for him to emerge from his home; the old man himself would have run out of his house and started ringing a tocsin calling people to defend the human heart..."

This brings the motive of the tocsin to Fedin's novel, the motive of active service to one's country as opposed to passive contemplation. The characters of the young in the novel are active and purposeful, embodying the new world view and representing a new type of human behaviour. They epitomise the potential strength of Soviet society and inspire optimism and confidence that all the hardship will be overcome.

Fedin does not gloss over the dark sides of life but he reveals the leading trends and struggles with deep insight into the human heart. The writer tries to record the "image of Time" in the complex interplay of circumstances and human acts reflecting the movement of life and the destinies of men against the background of the central events. Who rises to the challenge of the time? The answer to that question is a yardstick by which the moral stature of the characters in the novel is measured. The writer is drawn to active people.

One such person is the vividly drawn secretary of the regional Party committee, Novozhilov. A sense of danger ignites his energies, he looks younger and displays an extraordinary talent of organiser and leader.

By contrast, the character of Izvekov whom the reader has come to love after the early parts of the trilogy did not acquire new qualities in *The Conflagration*. It is somewhat less vivid than in the preceding novels. It is only at the end of *The Conflagration* that there are hints of a change in Izvekov's behaviour when the hostilities move closer to Tula. How does one account for that?

Much attention is given in the novel to the story of Izvekov's demotion. We must grant the artist his talented description of Izvekov's experiences and the episode in

which, as his mother says, he "deceived himself" but "did not try to deceive others". Fedin truthfully shows the "Izvekov case" drawing a situation in which Izvekov could not avoid a Party reprimand. Even Ragozin was powerless to help Izvekov. Izvekov had sponsored his old comrade, Gasilov (whom he knew during the Civil War and with whom he worked together) to go on a foreign trip while the latter turned out to be a traitor. He did not return home, and began to speak out against the Soviets and the Party. The Party reprimand given to Izvekov, the mistrust of the chairman of the Party commission, the puzzlement and coolness of Ragozin whose counsel Izvekov seeks—all this is vividly depicted in the novel.

But why, then, instead of acquiring new facets and becoming more expressive, does the image of Izvekov become bland and is devoid of the energy which propelled the plot in the previous novels? The question is not as simple as might appear at first sight. Without going into too much detail, let me mention the fact that in the new novel Izvekov's feelings and thoughts are concentrated on the negative circumstances of his "case". The large period in the character's life showing his advancement and ability (his contribution to the economic rehabilitation effort and his work at the Sormovo and Leningrad factories)—all that gets perfunctory mention as ordinary facts of a Party man's life. More often than not these facts are given as Izvekov's thoughts during his meeting with the Party commission chairman and are related in a matter-of-fact manner without individualising the character's traits.

Izvekov is lacking in revolutionary energy and has not the moral fibre to stand up to injustice and to act resolutely.

There are more expressive colours in the description of Izvekov's behaviour during the meeting of the regional Party committee when Novozhilov proclaims Tula to be in a state of siege. Izvekov regains some of his former energy, determination, drive, and breadth of vision. He comes to feel himself part of a larger collective and at the same time his feelings and thoughts are highly individual. They become a vehicle for expressing the characteristic features which accounted for the fortitude of the Soviet people at war, redoubled their confidence, eventually leading them to victory. Izvekov, like Novozhilov, feels rejuvenated and is eager to act. And the texture of the novel regains the

compelling power of implication that is a feature of Fedin's best writings. We have a feeling of living in the thick of events and breathing the atmosphere of the perilous time. The inserted novella about Izvekov disarming the band of Shostok in 1921 highlights the similarity of the hero's mood during the Civil War and at the start of the Great Patriotic War linking the two historic periods in the life of the country and investing the character's feelings and thoughts with the romanticism of struggle. The phone call from Ragozin who promises to help Izvekov find out the whereabouts of his wife trigger new emotions in Izvekov's heart. He feels that his friends are by his side. Izvekov is prey to conflicting reflections and feelings prompted by thoughts about his wife, daughter, Ragozin, Novozhilov, the war, and the destiny of his country. He reflects and interprets the most significant phenomena of life and this takes the character further towards becoming a type. The historical and the individual are blended in Izvekov's portraiture in a new way lending his character a new charm and complexion. At any rate, the new turn in the portrayal of Izvekov lends it a new epic dimension and makes him another memorable type of Communist in Soviet literature.

The vividness of Fedin's imagery, the truthful historical, social, and psychological atmosphere of Soviet life during the war—with the concrete period detail and a broad view revealing the nobleness of the people who are making history—all that is a major gain for Soviet literature.

* * *

It will be seen from the discussion of Fedin's work that the concrete and generalised characterisation in his novel was achieved due to deep penetration into the dialectic of life and the skill in evoking an authentic atmosphere of the epoch through images. The artist's subjective notions are a form of reflecting objective truth. The epic nature of the images and the philosophical purport are in such cases increased. Following that road, Soviet writers can make discoveries and bring depth and artistic expressiveness to the portrayal of the historical significance of the feat of arms performed by the Soviet people in saving humanity from the "brown plague".

NEW CONFLICTS: NEW CHARACTERS

I

A salient feature of contemporary Soviet literature is its desire to gain insight into and describe fully the new processes taking place in life. This is the ambition of all writers, including those who write about the rural scene.

It is not accidental that this theme has recently attracted interest. The reason for that is not only the rich experience of Soviet literature in describing rural life but also the dramatic change taking place in the life of collective farms, marked by new conflicts, changing mentality, and throwing up new problems of nation-wide significance. The relationship between the particular and the general—the sphere of the typical which most engages the artists—is seen from a new angle in rural life.

It proved to be no easy matter, however, to grasp the essence of the new *contradictory* change and the essence of the *particular* as manifested in the conflicts and the characters of the rural people.

Yet some writers reduced the particular to showing the difficulties, shortcomings, and darker sides of life and the suffering of people. They idealised other-worldly virtuous men who take a resigned attitude and quietly endure all hardship. Some critics hailed these books as the latest word in Soviet literature and believed that they contributed most to deeper insight into artistic truth.

But these books gave a one-sided picture of the life of collective farms because they concentrated on the negative aspects, forgetting about the things that ensured progress and held the promise of change. That created a gap between the author's conception and historical truth. The writer was unable to combine concreteness of narrative with generalised portrayal of the characteristic, with the creation of

typical characters who are pioneers in the struggle for new forms of life.

The breakthroughs in Soviet literature, including literature about the rural life, were linked above all with the depiction of the *specifically new* phenomena which emerged in the struggle against the old, scored victories and brought drastic change to the mentality and attitudes of the characters. Historical method, as always, helped writers to see the concrete forms in which the individual phenomena were manifested both in showing events (contradictions and conflicts) and in revealing the inner world of the hero.

But there were snags along that road, too. One thinks of the "no-conflict theory" which had exerted an impact on writing about rural life. This theory was unhistorical and undialectic because it did not lend historical dimensions to the victory of the new. Contradictions were ignored and glossed over, the new was isolated from its roots in real life, was de-individualised and deprived of the original features which could only be manifested in the struggle against the old.

The "no-conflict theory" was challenged in the early 1950s. Already a semi-documentary story by Valentin Ovechkin called *The Every-Day Life of a District* spoke truthfully about the difficulties and contradictions of collective-farm life in the post-war period. Ovechkin's story rejected the "no-conflict theory" and proved its fallacy. It was a milestone in Soviet literature owing to its penetration into the new conflicts and impassioned portrayal of the struggle between the new and the old in the collective farm. The characters of Borzov and Martynov were geared to the social analysis of new contradictions, an analysis which pointed out the differences between these characters as regards psychology, views, and attitudes.

This approach was widely adopted in Soviet literature. It accounts for the strong sides in the writing of Vladimir Tendryakov. The young writer boldly probed into new layers of life, raised sharp problems, and showed skill in moulding original characters. There was a ring of truth about his works. The story "Unwelcome" shows an attractive and noble character of Fyodor Soloveikov who challenged the old psychology geared to property and material gain. Subsequently noticeable changes took place in Tendryakov's work. Negative types came to dominate his books.

They determined the structure of the plot and were in general more vividly portrayed than the positive heroes. In tackling moral problems, the writer drifted further and further away from the concrete historical analysis of the conflicts and behaviour of the heroes and instead of the truthful picture of life there were the author's preconceived ideas.

Some other writers, too, neglected the historical approach and the social aspect in analysing complex phenomena. As a result prominence was given to the ideas of the author which are at odds with historical truth and which are expressed both in the way the conflicts and contradictions, and the feelings and acts of the characters are portrayed. Even if these writers managed to see a characteristic social phenomenon they were powerless to discern the historical trend behind this individual phenomenon. More often than not the new was devoid of its historical drive, attractiveness and beauty, and proved to be toothless in the confrontation with the old. The old, although portrayed in a negative light, is socially indeterminate. The writer's judgement of it is emotional and partial rather than based on historical understanding. Meanwhile knowledge of history is the yardstick of the writer's depth in understanding social evil as embodied in the old phenomena.

Without a historical approach to moral problems and individual characterisations it is impossible to reveal the true forms of the particular. A psychological character is not a given self-contained entity. It is a socially determined phenomenon. The correlation between the psychological and the social changes under socialism, which creates conditions for the moulding of a new man with a communist world view. That process, however, can only be seen if one takes a deep look at phenomena and analyses ongoing changes in a concrete manner. An abstract and speculative approach can divert one from the main thing, and that is from the overall trend which always manifests itself through particular phenomena. In such an approach, the facets of the universally human and the social phenomena can be blurred or distorted. Everything depends on the author's point of view.

Vassili Belov's talented story "All in a Day's Work" attracted readers and critics. It has an original character (Ivan Afrikanovich) and reveals the writer's knowledge of

the vernacular and ability to invest the narrative with humane feeling. I can subscribe to the praise of the writer's gift and the merits of the story. But it seems to me that some critics tend to overestimate the literary and public significance of that story when they proclaim that it portrays the national character.

The critic Inna Borisova, for example, believes that such characters as Ivan Afrikanovich are the mainstays of life and our main hope. However, those who took part in the discussion of Belov's story "All in a Day's Work" have pointed out the limitations of the main hero resulting from the author's psychological misjudgement in making too much of the earthiness of Ivan Afrikanovich and his restricted horizons. I would go along with that criticism.

The writer endows Ivan Afrikanovich with noble traits. One is moved by his love for his wife and his fair dealing with people. He has a keen sense of nature and has deeply-held ideas about goodness and justice. Nor can one say that he is out of touch with real life. He patiently endures all the hardship without losing his basic humanity. We sympathise with the hero just as we used to sympathise with the peasant characters of Khor and Kalinych in Ivan Turgenyev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*.

There is more to this analogy than meets the eye. The fact is that the strength of Belov's "All in a Day's Work" lies in its insight into the poetic soul of Ivan Afrikanovich, his natural feelings, integrity, and purity manifested in everyday life (his attitude to nature, farmwork, and to his duty as father to his children). These are endearing traits and at such moments our sympathies (and those of the writer) are entirely with Ivan Afrikanovich.

At the same time, we realise that such characterisation fails to take account of the changes in the people's character during the years of collectivisation. The whole setup of life at the collective farm has changed, especially in recent years when so much has been done to improve agriculture. And alongside with these changes the people's character has evolved. The world perception of Ivan Afrikanovich does not tell us everything about the new people's character. The new things which penetrated into every nook and cranny of our life, invaded rural life, and influenced people's notions and sentiments—all these novel things touched Ivan Afrikanovich indirectly (and then not to the best of effect) and

made little difference to his basic perception of the world. Of course the writer is entitled to depict such people (as does Belov). But then one should not impute universal significance to the character of Ivan Afrikanovich.

Ivan Afrikanovich is obviously lacking in active involvement, in understanding the new forms of life brought about by the collective farm system, he is not concerned enough about the needs of the collective farm and the shortcomings. This feature is pronounced in the positive heroes described by Sergei Krutilin in *Lipyagi*. In terms of historical truth it is impossible to create a people's character and depict its novel features within the narrow framework which Belov chose for his story.

Fyodor Abramov's novels *Two Winters and Three Summers* and *Roads and Crossroads* come closer to revealing the truth of the people.

Fyodor Abramov's novels are parts of a large canvas which he has conceived. They describe the life of a village in the north of the country beginning from the war time until the present day. Abramov draws on his personal experiences and impressions. He delves deep into the thick of life, and can draw vivid and original characters, convey their generosity, trace their feelings. He has understanding of the feelings and thoughts of common people. He reveals a remarkable gift of identifying himself with the people who in the hard years of the war and the post-war period were unsparing of their efforts and were concerned not about their own good but about their country and its victory over fascism. All this lends Abramov's novels a remarkable effect of authenticity. The writer succeeds in recreating the unforgettable atmosphere of those days by describing the simple and very true-to-life situations.

Abramov filled in some of the background for his works in an article entitled "The Plot and Life":

"It was a dreadful time. The steppes in the south, which had barely dried up after the spring thaw, reverberated with the roar of battles—the enemy was pushing towards the Volga. And here on the banks of my native Pinega another battle was being fought, a battle for bread and for life. There was no shelling and bullets were not whistling but there were the "funeral notices", there was misery and hard work. And the work was being done by half-starved peasant women, old folks, and adolescents.

"That summer I saw a lot of human hardship and suffering. But I saw even more courage and endurance, and typical Russian generosity. All that I had seen and personally experienced suggested my first novel *Brothers and Sisters* and then its sequel, *Two Winters and Three Summers*."

It is a very valuable testimony. It shows the sources of historical truth in a work of art.

As the picture of the life of a northern village in Fyodor Abramov's writings expands, his approach to revealing contradictions becomes more dialectical, and his skill in drawing graphic characters and analysing their inner world increases.

Compared with the works of some other authors (for example, Tendryakov's "Passing Away") Fyodor Abramov's novel is socially more specific in describing both circumstances and characters. There is greater awareness of the period with its characteristic details. In an afterword for the novel *Two Winters and Three Summers* the author tells us that the novel describes the past of the village of Pekashino. There is an attractive protagonist, Mikhail Pryaslin. The description of that young man's inner world pivots around his overcoming of difficulties, in which his sterling qualities are revealed. The writer succeeds in bringing harmony to his description of the character and the circumstances. The potential of the new social system is revealed in the novel through the best qualities of Pryaslin which are evolving day by day under the pressure of harsh circumstances.

Mikhail Pryaslin's altruism is of a very different quality than that of Ivan Afrikanovich in Belov's story. Mikhail does not just go about the daily peasant chores. He works with an understanding that he is contributing to the welfare of his village and his country, almost half of which has been engulfed by the flames of war. He does not say all that aloud but the memory of his father, who died in the war, lives in his heart. Mikhail Pryaslin's sense of duty is natural. He is a diligent worker (he does not mind doing any kind of farm work), he is considerate towards his mother, his little brothers and sisters, and helps his fellow-villagers. He has warmth and ready sympathy. These are the traits which make Mikhail Pryaslin a true character of the people. It matures in overcoming difficulties. Honest daily work gives Mikhail Pryaslin a sense of dignity. His life is akin to that of

many honest and dedicated people who form the backbone of collective-farm life.

The novel gives a full and many-sided idea of the life of the collective farm, and one is constantly aware of the post-war atmosphere.

The writer has a knack for poeticising work (no matter how hard) and the brighter sides of human nature which reveal themselves in the unlikeliest of situations. He succeeds in drawing original characters such as Anfisa Minina, a woman collective farm manager who bore all the wartime hardship; Podrezov, a strongwilled and resolute regional Party secretary; and Egorsha, a cheerful fellow with a lot of drive and an eye for the main chance. The writer conveys the special charm of northern landscapes in expressive idiom.

It is a work in the spirit of the people both in its mentality, its style, its clear perception of the world and a kind of tongue-in-cheek quality.

His next novel, *Roads and Crossroads*, also focuses on the rich spiritual world of the people, probing the depths of their feelings, giving tribute to their intelligence, their ready response to kind acts, as manifested in different spheres of life: in family relations, at work, and in their sense of duty. All this provides the author with a frame of reference. And it enables him, as in his former works, to give a balanced picture of life and even in portraying the darker sides of it to show how the best moral qualities of the people are revealed through hardship.

We watch the maturing of the strong character of Liza Pryaslina. It is the most vivid and genuinely poetic image in the novel. Her life with the wayward Egorsha was not very happy no matter how hard she tried to "tame" him and persuade him to settle down and work in the collective farm. Liza is deeply hurt by her family woes and is sometimes on the verge of despair. And yet innate optimism eventually prevails and helps her to break with Egorsha. She has a daughterly affection for Stepan Andrianovich who at the sunset of his life enjoys care, tenderness, and peace of mind. She rejoices in her motherhood. Her work takes her mind off unpleasant things and she is happy to be doing useful work:

"It was a dewy, crisp morning and the cows mooed loudly as they emerged from the barns. Neat, well-tended,

with sides so glossy you could almost use them as a looking glass.

"The village women shook their heads, 'Lizka, you surely know a secret about cows...'

"Sure enough, she knows a cow's secret, a whole lot of them. Get up at the crack of dawn and be the first at the farmyard and bring enough water to water and wash the cattle, and in the afternoon bring two or three cartloads of grass from the field, and not sleep your head off as some dairymaids do; and you wash and scrub the stall so that the bossies feel at home when they return from grazing. These were all her secrets."

In Abramov's novel work is shown as a creative and joyful process and as a yardstick by which people's worth is measured.

One of the key storylines in the novel is a thoroughly prosaic story of the building of a cowhouse in Pekashino. Told by Lukashin, it conveys a joyful feeling that life is beginning to change for the better.

"The collective farm's cowhouse is not much of a building, nothing to be terribly enthusiastic about. But if you were hard put to it to get a single log, if you had to shout until you were hoarsed at the regional officials to get a horse in winter to bring the logs—all the horses were marshalled for felling trees for firewood, if your carpenters team only consists of a couple of men—then, perhaps, a cowhouse is something to rejoice at."

The general feeling of fortitude coming from confidence of the people's strength creates a certain mood in the novel, an anticipation of a change for the better...

The most graphic and inspired scenes owe their merits to valid ideas and artistic excellence which are combined in the novel.

But Fyodor Abramov's novels are not without faults. To understand them one needs to take a deeper look at the writer's basic principles.

Fyodor Abramov links his description of the characters with the description of circumstances. A realistic writer, he is able to show exactly *how* the high morality of the characters is manifested in everyday life in a spontaneous way. His characters are anything but flat. Even the wayward Egorsha has his redeeming features, he is an able worker and a good father. That is a great tribute to Abramov's realism. His

characters are flesh-and-blood people who come across as familiar strangers, to use Belinsky's favourite phrase. The emphasis in his novel is on showing *how* a living person—with all the conflicting feelings, thoughts, and actions—reflects the objective force of circumstances. Because the novel *Roads and Crossroads* looks at the life of a northern village at a turning point (things are hard and the light is not yet clearly in sight) it would be all too easy for the author to slip into naturalism in describing the dark sides of life and emphasising the adverse circumstances over which the positive hero is powerless.

In tackling his complex task the writer might well have been overwhelmed by his "dreadful" impressions, and swept by emotions into giving a one-sided and basically untrue picture of life. The author, however, manages to avoid that, though not always, as will be seen presently.

What helps him in that? He identifies himself with the viewpoint of the people and their confidence of triumph of socialist morality. The writer sticks to his criteria. He clearly divides his characters into positive ones, such as Liza and Mikhail Pryaslins who are honest and upright, and the negative characters such as Egorsha or Khudyakov, manager of the neighbouring collective farm. The moral element in the description of the characters is indirectly linked with circumstances and is manifested in their behaviour. For that reason the characters in Abramov's *Roads and Crossroads* are socially motivated without losing their individuality.

Khudyakov comes out a particularly vivid character. He is a cunning fellow the likes of which the world has never seen. He has a gift of mimicry and skilfully disguises his greedy nature of a kulak behind a façade of a thrifty manager. He enjoys a reputation of a good worker, but in fact is a deceiver. He is not concerned about the national interests. Any means of earning money is all right for him (he sends the farmers to sell besoms in town at five kopecks apiece). As has been noted in the description of Khudyakov, the moral criterion is paramount and has a social import. Khudyakov's behaviour and his eye for the main chance invite a comparison with a kulak. In fact, Khudyakov is a kulak both in his social background and in his character: "They set him a high quota, remembering that his father used to own a tar works. Well, they'll yet hear from Averian Khudyakov! And sure enough, he showed them. They sent

him to the back country, Virvey, to fell trees, but he managed to get out of that stick-in-the-mud place. He became one of the top Stakhanovites—that's Khudyakov for you! " The image of a "thrifty manager" (some writers, for example, Yuri Kazakov in "Nestor and Kir" were inclined to gloss over the social implications of such a character and saw nothing wrong in their love of property) is exposed in Fyodor Abramov's novel as a character alien to the socialist mode of life and methods of economic management.

Khudyakov in Abramov's novel is opposed by Lukashin. True, Lukashin is a less vivid character than Khudyakov. He is somewhat bland, weak, and passive. Most of the time he is shown reflecting, worrying, and trying to persuade people, and act as a liaison man rather than a leader of the masses. The character of Lukashin already began to fade on the novel *Two Winters and Three Summers* where he embarks on a project with enthusiasm but then wilts. In *Roads and Crossroads* the author tries to "uplift" Lukashin. He puts him in a new situation. After an initial clash with the collective farmers Lukashin establishes a rapport with them and realises that he must get their support if they are to overcome difficulties together. Lukashin is a man of integrity. He is averse to shady deals and does not choose the soft option, as does Khudyakov.

The author's sympathies are on Lukashin's side. In order to invite our sympathy for Lukashin the author shows him to be capable of risk (as, for instance, when he orders the builders of the cowhouse to be issued 15 kilograms of grain from the new harvest during harvest time, for which he incurs a reprimand). But no matter how hard the author tries to upgrade the character of Lukashin, artistically it is anaemic and not among his most vivid characters. The exact combination of the individual and the general, which the author achieves in the character of Khudyakov, escapes him when he draws Lukashin. The author feels obliged to be a spokesman for Lukashin and that detracts from the artistic merit of his portrayal. Here is just one instance. The novel speaks about creating material incentives for the farmers. But at times the message is somewhat one-sided, especially when enunciated by Lukashin. For Lukashin the problem of material incentives is reduced to feeding the farmers: "a hungry man is no worker". Thus the dialectic of life disappears and the contradictions are seen from one

side. Lukashin also grapples with the complex problem of harmonising the private and the public concerns in the life of the farmers and raising labour efficiency. But he sounds somewhat monotonous and unconvincing.

“ ‘Take, for instance, myself, the manager...’ Lukashin gave an embarrassed smirk. ‘All I do is cracking the whip. Because I have nothing but the whip and my loud mouth. But to make the horse go you must give it barley...’ ”

A more complex idea of the contradictions of life is conveyed through the character of Podrezov, the regional Party secretary. That character appears in all the three novels of Abramov and it comes across as an artistic type of considerable strength. Podrezov is described from many angles. At the same time one clearly feels in him what Gorky described as “an individual core”, the features that make him original, individual, and at the same time typical. One can say that Podrezov’s character reflects his time which was at once *hard* (the war was on and almost every family had suffered bereavement) and *heroic* because each of the workers had contributed to the victory.

Podrezov is shown in close-up. He is above all a man of duty, a kind of “revolution’s workhorse” rather like Uvadiiev in Leonid Leonov’s *The River Sott*. The grim and heroic years of the war and post-war period taxed all the people’s strength and dedication. Podrezov himself worked like a horse and demanded that others work in the same way. He is a man of energy, drive, and strong will. He is able to mobilise all the resources of his region and achieve the impossible. He meets the production target and gives the country bread, meat, and timber. The image of Podrezov reflects the historical nature of his time with all its contradictions. His energy and dynamism are not just his nature. They meet a historical need. They are the qualities determined and engendered by circumstances. That is why Podrezov’s character, in spite of the contradictory and complex phenomena which he embodies, comes out as artistically complete.

Podrezov is intelligent and far-sighted. He has a clear grasp of the situation in the region and knows the plight of the people. And yet, in the conditions of war and just after the war, he sees no other way of managing the farm and meeting the production targets than *mobilising* the resources and exerting his *willpower*.

In the novel *Two Winters and Three Summers* Podrezov had a heart-to-heart talk with Lukashin in which he spoke against mercy:

"You too harp on the same tune. We have deserved a rest. If so who is going to work? Who is going to meet the timber target? And you know what target they set to us right after the war? It's enough to make your hair stand on end. And what would you have done? You are a former district Party worker? Go ahead tell me! I for one struck at the main grumblers, including your wife..." (he is referring to Anfisa Minina, the collective farm manager—V.N.)

Podrezov speaks about the difficulties openly: he knows them at first hand. He has himself experienced and borne the brunt of them. He is not the kind of man to throw up the sponge. For him the main thing is to overcome obstacles: "Do you know how we contributed to the war effort here? I bet you don't know! ... And what is one summer anyway? That summer was followed by 1943 and 1943 was followed by 1944. That was a year! We ate moss and crushed pine cones. And 1944 was followed by 1945. And all these years we kept saying to the people: be patient, women! When the war is over we'll live well. We'll eat our fill. We even had lectures on 'Our Life After the War'. There is nothing we wouldn't do for the sake of victory... In general people looked forward to victory, awaited victory like a miracle. Everything, but everything would change. On that very day. You see? And how can it change if the country lies in shards?"

The author does not condone the wilful actions of Podrezov. Nor does he go to the opposite extreme of overlooking his positive features. As a result the portrait of Podrezov is complex. Podrezov makes no allowances for the difficult time, and is tough and demanding towards people, all of which makes him akin to Borzov in Ovechkin's *The Everyday Life of a District*. The time of action in both books is 1951-1952. Abramov describes what was first described back in 1952. Ovechkin was drawing the portrait of Borzov in a publicistic manner. As a sensitive writer he was aware that the bulk of the Party workers were not like Borzov. He opposed Borzov to Martynov. Turning to the same theme twenty years later, Abramov can afford to be more impartial and thoroughgoing in revealing social processes. The character of Podrezov reflects both the positive and

the negative features of reality.

Podrezov is shown in evolution. We are told about his young years which moulded his strong character. A simple country lad identified himself totally with the building of socialism. His story of how he built a school in his native village along with other YCL'ers, how he became chairman of the village Soviet and then of the commune and was promoted to Party work—all this reflects the spirit of construction and the rapid change in the mentality of Soviet people in the 1930s.

The novel *Roads and Crossroads* is so structured as to give greater and greater prominence to Podrezov's positive traits (as compared with the novel *Two Winters and Three Summers*). Now, six years after the war, he and Lukashin are thinking of the need to work in a new way and improve the material well-being of the farmers. When things come to a crunch—Lukashin is accused of squandering wheat and Khudyakov's tricks are exposed—Podrezov, whom they want to make a scapegoat, does not rat. He demurs at the course of action proposed by the third secretary of the Party committee, Fokin (a man skilled in public relations) who suggests that he should put all the blame on Lukashin and Khudyakov and thus save his own skin. Podrezov's integrity is vividly seen at the decisive moment. He is not guided by self-interest: his conscience of a Party man forbids him to act on Fokin's promptings.

"'But what will happen to Lukashin and Khudyakov?' he thinks after listening to Fokin's testimony. 'They're sure to go under. All this talk about what I knew and what I didn't know... It was my duty to know! ' "

"Podrezov plucked up all his courage and rose to his feet.

" 'Lukashin was distributing wheat with my permission. I ordered it.'

"He paused, peering at the stunned audience, and drove in the last nail.

" 'They mentioned Khudyakov's fields here. I knew all about them. I knew everything. What goddamn regional boss would I be if I didn't know what was happening right under my nose? ' "

Podrezov's self-denial, dedication and talent for organisation make one think of the character of Egor Trubnikov in the film called *The Chairman*. A flesh-and-blood person becomes a type.

The main thrust of Abramov's novel is to show that the life of the Pinega region is changing, if slowly, for the better. The Sotyuzhensky timbering complex is a vivid example. The novel draws an attractive character of Zarudny, the newly-appointed manager of the complex. He champions the introduction of new machinery and scientific methods. So far his suggestions have met with heavy going. They are opposed even by some of the regional Party leaders.

It is true that Zarudny's character lacks in vivid colours. The author is merely staking a claim to the description of a new type of hero. But it is an important claim. The objective course of events and the whole atmosphere of Zarudny's conflict with the conservatives show that changes for the better are bound to take place. History is on Zarudny's side.

The emerging signs of the new are somewhat less apparent in the life of Pekashino. Because the period described is very complex (changes are still maturing) *direct* signs are few and far between. Fyodor Abramov's skill consists in conveying the atmosphere pregnant with change. It is clearly felt in the moral sphere and the spiritual richness of the characters of simple people such as Liza Pryaslina, Pyotr Zhitov, and Ilya Netyosov. They have dignity and confidence. Take, for instance, Pyotr Zhitov, the local sage and initiator of new projects. He bears a bitter grudge against his fate (he is a war invalid) but that does not prevent him from displaying broad thinking when it comes to the running of the farm. The novel ends on an upbeat note. Ilya Netyosov returns to the collective farm with his numerous children, and tells Mikhail Pryaslin, "I think life will now take a turn for the better." That final scene reflects the tone of the whole narrative.

And yet, the moral sphere apart, contradictions are to be found in Abramov's novel. The shortcomings of the novel are the extension of its merits. Confronted with the complexities and contradictions of the period described in the novel, Abramov does not always maintain the level of vision that marks the final scene. He fails to do full justice to the new social phenomena which were relentlessly fighting for recognition and determined the Party work and the life of the collective farm. The new is shown indirectly as the prevailing sentiments of the masses. And the writer's

colours in describing the new are less vivid than in describing the old. A recurrent motive in the novel (already found in *Two Winters and Three Summers*) is this: the farmers have no bread, they've been promised that after the war things would be better but life is still hard. There is a lack of perspective in some parts of the novel, with contradictions being stated but not analysed.

The dialectical approach is found wanting in the portrayal of the main character, Mikhail Pryaslin. That character stops evolving towards the end of the novel *Two Winters and Three Summers*, and especially so in *Roads and Crossroads*.

In Abramov's earlier novels the character of Mikhail Pryaslin carried an important social and ideological message and expressed the key trend of life, i. e., the overcoming of difficulties, spiritual maturing and moulding of a new generation of builders during and after the war. In Abramov's new novel the character of Mikhail Pryaslin performs a different function. Only his private life is shown. The scenes of Pryaslin's meetings with Varvara's niece Dunyashka, Nyurka Yakovleva and Rayechka Klevkina are rich in the details of peasant life and show the raw vigour of the young hero. But they obscure somewhat the main features of Mikhail Pryaslin and fail to show that Mikhail Pryaslin had matured *not only* physically. The sphere in which the character reveals himself is narrowed. There is something contrived about the scenes in which Mikhail Pryaslin collects signatures under a statement in defence of Lukashin. They seem to be specially designed to "uplift" the character and make it appear to be socially involved. The tone in these scenes is different from the rest of the story, with the dark colours drowning out the optimistic ones. At the end of the novel the writer makes an attempt to give an epic dimension to the portrayal of Mikhail Pryaslin.

"He stood on Netyosov's porch, his feet set wide apart, shading his eyes with his hand in the peasant way as he looked at the receding wedge of cranes flying south, and his mental gaze seemed to embrace the whole of his native land. A vast land green with the fuzz of young winter crops.

"It was he who through all these hard years, together with the women of Pekashino, was raising it from ruins, rebuilding, and feeding the cities. And a new and proud feeling of a master welled up in him."

Sometimes the publicist in Abramov prevails over the artist and then one feels that the author departs from the objective view of reality. He becomes partial in portraying situations and characters. That is most apparent in *Roads and Crossroads*, which draws sketches of regional Party workers. Some characters are verging on caricature. One thinks of the image of Ganichev, the regional Party committee's instructor, and all the scenes of the study of Stalin's *Questions of Linguistics*. Such a glib depiction of complex phenomena of life is not conducive to historical authenticity. The ironic view of Ganichev, who knows by heart "all the Party's rulings", seems inappropriate, especially when we learn about the difficult conditions in which Ganichev has to work, about his personal problems and his dedication, which cannot but arouse our sympathy for him.

The language of Abramov's novel is precise and expressive, and rich in popular idiom. It reflects the intelligence and wit of the Russians. The writer is adept at describing his characters through their speech and revealing the depths of their emotions through inner monologue. In his new novel, however, Abramov sometimes uses local words and expressions unnecessarily, which detracts from the aesthetic impact of the vernacular.

The main achievement of recent Soviet writings is that they reveal the creative potential of the Soviet people and their rich inner world. Following that line, writers have shown the struggle between the old and the new in the life of collective farms, and have created a gallery of characters expressive of typical phenomena.

Krutilin's novel *Lipyagi* derives its poetic quality from the tangible perception of the complexity and strength of the simple people as a result of the changes which have taken place in their lives. One of the parts in Krutilin's novel ("The Willows") tells the simple story of how an old peasant log house is being taken apart, one row of beams after another. But that simple story is invested with great content. Concrete facts about the history of the Andreyev family signpost the dramatic changes which have taken place over many years.

The author draws the portraits of two men: the grandfather whose views have been shaped by the world of private property, and the father, who keeps to a very different set of convictions. These two people are contrast-

ed to one another and their relationship creates the tension of the narrative. The grandfather opposed the collective farm from the outset. He did not believe that it was possible to work together. Corrupted by the sense of property, he places self-interest above public interest. And this being so, he believes that life could never be changed. The father was team leader in the collective farm in the direst of times, working and making others work for the farm forgetting about personal interests. The father, a communist by nature, has always lived for the sake of others.

On the face of it, "The Willows" tells about the dissolution of the Andreyev family nest: grandfather dies a sudden death taking his grudges with him to the grave. Father also died suddenly without living to see the new flourishing of his farm in which he believed and towards which he had worked so hard. The children scattered: Stepan became a fitter, Fyodor a foreman, and the story-teller, Andrei, got an education and became a teacher in his native village. Only Mitya and his sister Maria remained with the collective farm. But that merely scratches the surface of the story. The underlying theme is the triumph of the new modes of life and economic structures.

The story shows that despite all the difficulties and abuses which the Lipyagi collective farm had lived through, life moves inexorably forward. The people of Lipyagi cherish the memory of the first chairman of their farm, Chugunok, who treated people with concern, always took counsel with them in making decisions, and had done so much to strengthen the farm. Krutilin draws the portraits of farmers who enjoy doing something good for the farm and the fellow-villagers. They are fond of their work and rejoice in their successes. The tractor driver Birdyuk and the collective-farm chairman Luzianin are just two such characters.

Krutilin's stories are permeated with the joyful feeling that the efforts of our fathers have not been wasted and that their dreams are coming true today.

Lipyagi reveals the dialectic of life, which is seen not only as the struggle of opposites, but as forward movement, a perpetual process of renewal. The author admires human deeds for the common good. He has skill in showing social change through individual life stories. Behind the actions, feelings and strivings of the heroes we see the larger trends.

The positive heroes in Krutilin's novel have great warmth about them.

This is true, for example, of Luzianin, who introduces a new important theme to the novel and ushers in a new stage in the life of the village. Luzianin is seen against a broad historical background. He is a new type of worker. He shares with Chugunok passionate commitment to the cause of the collective farm and kindly and considerate attitude towards people. Thus the link between the generations of communist managers is stressed. But Luzianin is a stronger and more gifted worker than Chugunok, his horizons and the scope of his activities are broader. And the range of his duties is also wider. While his main task is to improve agriculture by introducing new scientific methods, he has to attend to sundry other questions. They include the building of new houses, electrification, child care, and providing cultural amenities for the farmers. The face of the village is changing. The gap between town and countryside is narrowing and new methods of work are called for.

Luzianin lives up to the new challenges of the time. He is involved in key events in the country's history. He has extensive experience of Party work and economic management. Krutilin introduced that character at a time when some young writers in their works invariably depicted the older leaders in a critical light. The writer gives a polemical thrust to his positive attitude towards Luzianin, showing him to be a communist in the Lenin mould, a wise and kind leader. All his initiatives aimed at running the farm more efficiently meet with a ready response among the farmers. In his unassuming story of how Luzianin treats people, inspects fields, talks with the agronomist, teachers and tractor drivers and seeks their advice in deciding about new methods of sowing, reaping and mechanisation, and about work and life in general, the author shows feelingly, yet without pressing his point too hard, that new attitudes and ways are prevailing. The actions of an individual make us aware of a whole new stage in the development of collective farms.

Luzianin is opposed in Krutilin's novel by a different type of leader, the domineering, career-seeking regional Party secretary Paramonov whose tragic story is told in the novella called "Quagmire". The title is metaphoric for it shows into what a mire Paramonov was pushing the collec-

tive farm by his practice of tokenism and window-dressing. The moral assessment of the character gets a social edge to it. Paramonov is portrayed as a strong-willed man. But his will is directed not towards overcoming the difficulties and improving collective farm life, as in the case of Luzianin. He is a careerist. In order to distinguish himself, he makes the farms in his region set themselves unrealistically high production targets. His strong will thus proves harmful for other people and brings about his own undoing. Having surrounded himself with toadies, he embarks on the path of deceit, and fearing exposure, commits suicide.

Krutilin shows that the objective course of our life does not favour such people as Paramonov. The Party and the people mercilessly oppose the Paramonovs. The historical truth is on the side of Luzianin and the army of honest and dedicated workers poetically portrayed in Krutilin's novel. The poeticism of change in *Lipyagi* takes its sources in life. This is part of the tradition of Soviet literature about rural life, and it is equally true of Oles Honchar's novel *The Tronka*. These two novels are the most significant Soviet prose works of recent years which show through the characters and a poetic view of their qualities how the new communist attitudes are prevailing everywhere in our life.

The Tronka seems to be telling about ordinary things: an airman comes to visit his old father, a shepherd by the name of Horpishchenko. The old woman Doroshenko is waiting for her son, a captain of an ocean-going ship, who is coming for a visit. Secondary school pupils are about to finish school and are deciding which careers to choose. A team of bulldozer operators are digging an irrigation canal which will bring water to arid lands. A mobile film show is travelling the fields, and so on and so forth.

Then suddenly, as if by a magic wand, the real images acquire a second life, as it were, and a new poetic expressiveness. They remain concrete in spite of the fact that the writer uses romantic methods. The feelings, thoughts, and acts of the characters are graphically portrayed and invested with deep meaning.

Oles Honchar's manner is at once lyrical and epic. We are aware of the subtle links between the life of state farmers in South Ukraine and the history of the country and the world. The lyrical form of narrative gives the writer a broad view and enables him to probe deep into the inner

world of his heroes. At the same time, the scope of the activities in which the characters are engaged, memories of the Great Patriotic War, of past events, as well as the heroic behaviour of the people in the present invest the novel with drama, recreate the atmosphere of our stormy epoch and impart an epic character to the novel. The novel proceeds on many levels and tackles many problems. The writer holds within his purview the whole life with all its sharp conflicts and contradictions. The age-old outdated attitudes exist side by side with the new. But unlike some writers who have concentrated on dramatising the strength of the old and the negative phenomena, Oles Honchar shows life as the triumph of the new and the positive. That lends inner dynamism and a forward-looking character to his novel. Details carry a poetic message. The author's optimistic perception of the world dominates both the life stories and the treatment of contradictions, thus notwithstanding the tragedies of the past (the horrors of war) and natural disasters (sand storms). The new relentlessly penetrates everywhere and brings out the inherent generosity and nobleness of people.

The writer takes a lofty view of the beautiful. Along with Pushkin he feels that "the beautiful must be grand". He has deep attachment to working people. He admires the high-mindedness of the school leavers and draws an inspired gallery of young people who hold the country's future in their hands. New communist relations become part of life and are a motive force for Soviet people of the older and the younger generations. Cheerful colours reminiscent of Flemish paintings are used to draw the picture of work as the writer admires the strong positive heroes and saturates the landscapes with the signs of the new flourishing of life.

The narrative effects an organic blend between lyrical and epic forms. And that makes the images particularly graphic. The rich palette of the novel breathes the space and freedom of our time. Nature and people in the novel display their potential with great sweep. When the writer tells us about the green billows of forests, the golden shocks of corn, the boundless field of ripe wheat it is not exaggeration but imaginatively depicted truth and beauty of our life, a hymn to the transformative work of the Soviet man.

Oles Honchar shows changes not only in the landscape and daily rural life but also in the mentality of the Soviet

man. The positive heroes of Oles Honchar are perceptive of the whole world, from the most trivial of events to space-flights.

Oles Honchar shows in his novel how the gap between town and countryside is being bridged not only in material terms but—most important—in the mode of life, relations among people, and their notions of the world. Both rural and urban workers show features of close affinity in Honchar's novel. The old shepherd Horpishchenko is proud not only of his job but also of the fact that his work is useful and is held in high esteem in this country. And it is an even greater source of pride for him that his family has produced a jet-pilot, Pyotr Horpishchenko, who is training to be a spaceman. This orientation towards the future and the heroics of the everyday work of ordinary people who reveal the traits of a new man invest Oles Honchar's novel with spirituality. It pinpoints the most essential features of the modern times and testifies to the triumph of communist attitudes in our life.

Historical flashbacks and associations play a special role in Oles Honchar's novel. Pictures of the past (the desolate steppes during the conquest of the nomad khans), the outburst of revolutionary energy during the Civil War (the canal passes through the places where the Red Army made its way towards Perekop), the heroism of the people during the Great Patriotic War, memories of which are very much alive in the minds of the people and their surroundings—all this is poetically treated in the novel in a generalised way and in finely etched pictures, to add up to a narrative of epic dimensions. And the same graphic skill is displayed by Oles Honchar in depicting the present time, with all the events and the heroic exploits of the people. And there, too, the usual and the unusual interweave in a fanciful way to perform the main task, and that is to convey the diversity of life and its dialectics. The village boys—Vitaly Ryasnoi and Sashko Litvinenko—have embarked on an unusual project. They want to solve the problem of space radio relay. So rich is their world, so diverse and profound their interests and so marked their abilities that we believe in the reality of their dreams and believe that they will be able to translate them into life.

And there is a poetic and pure, youthful vibrancy about the way the love of Vitaly Ryasnoi and Tonya Horpish-

chenko is depicted. Their love is subjected to trials and even prompts heroic behaviour (the chapter called "Iron Island"). There is a boldly drawn romantic figure of the young bulldozer driver Kuzma Osadchy, a character which rings true to life. He does his job with such élan, he looks at the world with such optimism, eats, drinks, and talks with such gusto and has such vivid pictures of the future that we feast our eyes on him. He appears as a flesh-and-blood individual and at the same time a type of a new man inspired with the romanticism of creative effort.

Both the events of today and the characters in Oles Honchar's novel are oriented towards the future. This lends particular expressiveness to the poetic generalisation which in his case proceeds from concrete images. Real characters and images reflect a wider perspective and acquire many facets. The type does not merely embody the characteristic (in a highly individual form) but gives us an idea of the prevailing social trend, conveys the author's attitude and carries a message. When Oles Honchar jokingly says that Kuzma Osadchy "has emerged in the wide world of the 20th century" these words strike us as a very apt metaphor. It expresses not only the world perception of the character who thinks of himself as the master of his land and maker of history, but also the author's deeply-held conceptions. Soviet reality and Soviet people are portrayed in rapid development.

The triumph of the new in the life of the village is described with varying degrees of success in Zarudny's novel *In the Wide World*, in the novel of Avyzius called *The Village at a Crossroads*, in Kochetkov's story "The Road Through the Heart" and the novel of Melezh entitled *The Breath of Storm*.

In his story "Three Bags of Impure Grain" Vladimir Tendryakov takes a deeper look at the contradictions of life. He shows the period of gravest difficulties in the life of a collective farm in the Vologda area. The last year of the war taxes all the stamina and strength on its inhabitants.

The writer's realism is stern. He brings stark colours to describing the difficult conditions of the farmers, the abuses in the purchase of grain, and at times he deliberately exaggerates things. The bleak sulky skies, mud, and the howling of hungry dogs—all this creates a special atmosphere, and the reader begins to wonder whether Tendryakov

in this novel is repeating himself.

And indeed, one is aware in this story of a somewhat metaphysical approach to the contradictions of life and the description of characters. The collective-farm manager, Andrian Glushchev, appears as an embodiment of abstract Christian morality: love your neighbour as you love yourself, and do good to him no matter who he is, even if he is a murderer like Mitrofan Zobnin. In the structure of the story, Andrian Glushchev is opposed by Bozheumov, a heartless and embittered bigot whose cruelty knows no limits and who is ruthlessly dedicated to duty understood in a simplistic and straightforward way—you should die if necessary in order to accomplish your task even if it happens to be an impossible one. He hates his fellowmen and thinks that kindness is a source of evil. One finds some rather abstract reasoning in Tendryakov's story. For example, Andrian Glushchev tells the chairman of the village council, war veteran Kisterev, a selfless champion of truth: " 'You are bent on getting at the truth by your own death.'

" 'It's my own death, not another man's.'

" 'And suppose your own life is not enough, and then one would be tempted to make others give their lives—come on, don't spare yourself, after all it's in a good cause.' "

In such instances Andrian Glushchev's speech loses individuality.

There is a preconceived idea behind the portrayal of former kulak Mitrofan Zobnin. The image of that murderer and hater of men is so generalised as to appear almost a mythical figure, a monster risen from the grave, and not a living person. He has no individual traits.

Even so, truthful portrayal of life prevails over the writer's subjective ideas. On the whole, he does not describe complex phenomena in a simplistic way and does not try to fit events into a preconceived scheme. At the climax of the story, when three bags of impure grain which have been left as an emergency ration by Andrian Glushchev ("people have to be fit to work in spring...") are confiscated on orders from Bozheumov, Tendryakov's realism is at its most powerful, and so are his insight into contradictions and his grasp of the basic trends in life, of the moral makeup of people and the promise of future success. The writer's view of contradictions is not that of a man on the sidelines but of someone involved in the events. Evil does not appear as

all-powerful and unconquerable in his story. Bozheumov orders to "start an inquiry" into the actions of Andrian Glushchev in order to accuse him of hoarding grain, but he fails in carrying out his plan. Bozheumov meets with stiff opposition of Kisterev, and then from the young official Zhenka Tulupov and then from the district Party Secretary Bakhtiarov.

Tendryakov portrays his positive heroes in their close links with the circumstances so that they reveal their most characteristic traits at the high points in the narrative. The behaviour of the characters is highly authentic. Tendryakov stresses the vast experience of life possessed by Bakhtiarov and Kisterev. Before the war Bakhtiarov was an agronomist. He collected bumper crops and was the head of the largest state farm in the region. And during the war he was able to set up about a dozen small farms on wasteland around the city to improve food supplies for the factory workers. And then he was sent to a rural district in the hinterlands. His friend Kisterev, a former teacher, had a hard time during the war. He saw the suffering of other people and was himself wounded more than once. But he has preserved his sterling nature and his faith in his fellow-men and in the future.

As regards narrative structure, Bakhtiarov and Kisterev are the antipodes of the heartless dogmatist Bozheumov. They express the main message of the book. But while a salient feature of Kisterev is self-sacrifice (the author's penchant for the unusual shows in the way that character is drawn), Bakhtiarov manifests his individuality in a very real situation. He is a type of worker who has a sober judgement of people, a good grasp of life's complexities, and a clear perspective in the most difficult of circumstances. He has no use for empty talk, and is often seen brooding silently over what he sees. But when he does speak his words are expressive. He restrains the impulsive actions of Kisterev, and argues potently with Bozheumov telling him with conviction that the time has come to relax somewhat the harsh demands of wartime, urging him to think about the people's welfare and about strengthening the farms and their future:

"You don't have to be a prophet to see that the new year will be a peaceful year for us. And that means that we should prepare ourselves for peaceful life today... In the war, it was just one thing—to stand our ground and to

survive! Nobody doubts that we have stood our ground. And if so, you must think of the future, about the harvest we are going to have at the end of next year, and you shouldn't be your own enemy..."

Bakhtiarov speaks with deep conviction. He overrules Bozheumov's orders on putting Andrian Glushchev on trial. He shows concern for the people who lived through untold hardship during the war leading a hungry existence in order to supply the city and troops with grain. He knows that it is up to the farmers to improve the farms which have been bled white during the war. "Let us not stretch the farmers' endurance to the limit, let's spare them," he challenges Bozheumov. His sole concern is how to restore his once rich farming area which used to be a granary.

Tendryakov shows in his story that the glaring contradictions, difficulties, and even tragedies (Kisterev dies of a heart attack brought on by his conflict with Bozheumov) no matter how grave, are temporary while positive aspects of life are bound to prevail. This idea runs through the whole story, linking disparate situations into a single picture and showing all the characters in a definite light. This idea has deep moral, social, and historical implications. One can argue whether the description of Zhenka Tulupov with his romantic dreams of Campanella's "city of the sun", is entirely successful. At any rate, that character is shown in evolution. A pure and honest man who went through the war, was wounded, and after hospital sees the hardship of collective-farm life is aware not only of the hardship but people with hearts of gold. He meets the wise philosopher Andrian Glushchev, and sees how work-weary women farmers are transformed by working together. They work with gusto, and he himself is carried away by their zeal:

"Get out of the way or I'll bury you in the grain!"

"You will yet feel the smell of baked bread in your home.

"Your children will grow up healthy.

"Some of you will see your husbands return from the war.

"And to some of you your youth and beauty will return...

"The sun made its progress over the tops of the fir-trees in the distance, the fields stretched all around you, and the deep blue shadows were frozen in the hollows. The thresher

was roaring hungrily and loudly, spitting out broken straw. His sweat-drenched tunic stuck to his back."

Down on the farm, Zhenka fell in love and lived through some nerve-racking experiences. He found out to his own cost the harm of Bozheumov's practices. That man is prepared to sacrifice not only himself but all the other farmers for the sake of his misguided sense of duty. His idea of duty is a kind of Moloch. Zhenka's sympathies are with Kisterev and Bakhtiarov. He challenges Bozheumov and manifests the best features of a communist.

At its best, the story "Three Bags of Impure Grain" combines philosophical grasp of the facts and vivid portrayal of life's contradictions and graphic characterisation.

Along with the story "Three Bags of Impure Grain" Tendryakov published a very inspired and poetic story which seems to be washed in the bright light of spring. Called "A Topsy-Turvy Spring", it is about the joys and disappointments experienced by a child learning about the world. The general mood of the story is cheerful.

II

A poetic view of the changing life of the grassroots enables the writers to keep the correct angle in their description no matter how complex the phenomena they describe. An example in point is Alexeyev's story "Bread Is a Noun". The writer is concerned with the inner world of his characters who are, on the face of it, rather unremarkable people. But gradually it grows on the reader that before him are people with unusual life stories and possessing unusual qualities. It can be said that Alexeyev's book is inhabited by "familiar strangers" who have been discovered by the artist: star-gazers and dreamers, people of integrity, such as Apollon Styshnoi, original and beautiful Russian women (Zhuravushka), self-appointed conservationists who are at one with Nature (Merkidon Lyushnya), champions of truth ("the eternal deputy" Akimushka Akimov), and extraordinary self-made talents such as the local naturalist Egor Grushin, to mention just a few.

The author uses various methods, including contrast, to describe his characters. The positive heroes oppose the villains. Egor Grushin, a dedicated worker who is concerned

with the welfare of the farm, is in conflict with Vassili Markelov, a mean and grasping man; Akimushka, a selfless helper of all the needy (he charged nothing for his blacksmithery thus making himself a laughing stock among the kulaks) is contrasted with Aunt Glafira, a pious greedy woman whose main occupation is pilfering the property of the collective farm.

The author often underlines the odd appearance of his characters as if to stress that the appearance does not always coincide with the nature of the person.

Merkidon Lyushnya earned the nickname "nitwit" because he voluntarily took on the task of protecting the forest. He kept off poachers with an angry cry: "Down with your axe and saw or I'll open fire!" But the writer shows us the living soul of the character, his love of Nature, and gives us a glimpse of the poetic picture of the world as seen by Merkidon. And we realise that the poetic vision of the world is what makes that character tick. We see that the villagers misjudge him.

Stressing the characteristic features of Merkidon, the author introduces a twist in the narrative and moves from describing his perception of the world to practical aspects of farming. And there Merkidon reveals an unusual foresight and keen observation.

Egor Grushin also appears as a slightly odd character. He is obsessed with raising vegetables and fruits. But he does so not for gain. His private lot is forever in a mess, his hut is shabby and his potato crop poorly tended. He is obsessed with innovation, now breeding a new variety of grapes and now unusual tomatoes. An inept and clumsy figure, when at work he seems to light up from within, whenever some new project is being discussed. His friend Ivan Mikhailov teases him and the two are engaged in interminable arguments. Then comes a big break for Egor Grushin. He launches on an unusual undertaking and decides to grow tomatoes without seedlings. He stays up at night, drives his children and himself, grows thin and wastes away but in the end he accomplishes his "miracle" and the collective farm makes a handsome profit by collecting an early tomato harvest from a large plot.

Alexeyev admires people who are beautiful both physically and spiritually. This is true of Zhuravushka, a sincere and beautiful Russian woman who reminds one of the

women in the classic writings of Turgenev and Nekrassov.

It is a long time since we had such a poetic portrayal of women. The remarkable thing is that there is nothing remarkable about Zhuravushka. But the appeal of that character lies precisely in the fact that the writer makes this ordinary woman extraordinary. He shows how Zhuravushka's noble qualities come out in everything she does. That Russian woman has lived through a good deal of hardship. The war parted her with her husband the year they got married, and before long she got news that he had died in action. So Zhuravushka was left alone with her son Sergei. She worked three times the normal quota on the farm. She suffered from hunger and cold and raised her son. One cannot be left unmoved by the story about the hardship experienced by a mother such as befell many Russian women in the postwar years.

Zhuravushka withstood all the trials, and kept her physical and spiritual beauty and gained new vitality after the war when things got back to normal, her son grew up, and their farm was restored. The attractive features of Zhuravushka are a moral purity that carries everything before it, and comes out in her love for her husband and her son—"her own flesh and blood"—and her sense of duty as understood by the common Russian woman, to work tirelessly, to bring up her son, and to show concern for other people. Everything she does she does simply and with profound feeling. The natural state of a worker who is noble without striking attitudes has been poetically reflected in the character of Zhuravushka.

An equally poetic character in Alexeyev's book, the "eternal deputy", Akimushka Akimov, lives for the sake of others and sees that as the meaning of his life. His generous nature was especially manifested during the war. As the only blacksmith of the village, Akimushka had been exempted from the army service and so stayed in the village to witness the hardship and grief of the women. He did his best to help every family by giving a loaf of bread, bringing firewood, mending somebody's hut, or at least by saying a kindly word and giving compassion which people needed so much.

A simple fact, very common in Soviet reality, is used to sing a hymn to human warmth and kindness. The author shows the great strength that was derived from mutual help.

among the people and the enormous role which it played during the war when the limits of human endurance were tested.

A whole gallery of Soviet farmers created by Krutilin, Alexeyev, Stelmakh, and other writers shows that it is such people as Akimushka, Zhuravushka, Marko Bessmertny, Vassili Andreyev, collective farm managers Chugunok and Luzianin (in *Lipyagi*) who played the decisive role in the life of the farm. Thanks to them the collective-farm system weathered all the storms and became stronger. It was accepted by the people as the only correct way which could lead the peasants to a new life and ensure the successful building of socialism.

III

Despite all the hardship that the people had to bear they are portrayed not as sufferers but as a creative force. The very growth of the characters and the moulding of their mentality expresses the progressive march of socialism.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate that: the character of Marko Bessmertny in Stelmakh's play *Truth and Untruth* (the play is a substantially altered version of a well-known novel) and Egor Trubnikov in a film by A. Saltykov and Yu. Nagibin called *The Chairman*.

Marko Bessmertny is a generalised image manifesting a historic phenomenon. The character evolves along with the sweeping change taking place in the country. In the original novel, that idea was conveyed with an epic force that is a hallmark of Stelmakh's writing. In the play, thanks to concentrated dramatic action, Marko Bessmertny appears as a more integral and dynamic character and exerts a greater artistic impact.

Marko Bessmertny's main traits are manifested in the flames of battle. He is by nature an uncompromising fighter and a man of principle. No matter how hard the circumstances in the postwar period, no matter how treacherous the enemy, especially such people as Potseluiiko and Koval, Marko Bessmertny carries the day in the end. He is the hero who propels the action in the play, his uncompromising staunchness adds drama to the struggles and clashes, and his wisdom and his truth prevail over untruth.

The dramatist deliberately underlines the extraordinary qualities of Marko Bessmertny. To this end he combines realistic and romantic methods and uses the devices of popular mystery shows, and the pithy vernacular and folk humour. Marko Bessmertny is an embodiment of the element of the people, of the people's resourcefulness, wisdom, and courage. At the same time it is the historical events in which he is involved (the Revolution, the Civil War, collectivisation and the war against the German invaders) that put him in the forefront of the builders of the new life, and mould him as a new type of leader. He puts the common interests above everything else. His main aim in life is serving people. That trait, which is characteristic of a Lenin-type Bolshevik, is the mainspring of Marko Bessmertny's character, and it is revealed in the play under new circumstances when he challenges arbitrary actions, pilfering of the public property and perversions of the democratic principles of collective-farm life. Stelmakh boldly combines satire and pathos. His character says some high-sounding words about his convictions but these are not mere words, for they express the way Marko Bessmertny sees the meaning of his life and struggles.

His communist principles determine Marko Bessmertny's behaviour in the main conflict described in the play. It is his loyalty to these principles that lends poignancy to his clash with Bezborodko who squanders the property of the farm, and with Koval who acts arbitrarily. His principles are a measure of the lofty goal for which the hero is standing up. The play has the qualities of a popular heroic drama, and it reflects in an original way the basic truth of our age, namely, the growing strength of the people. It is a new Bolshevik, Leninist truth.

The same idea is conveyed in the film *The Chairman*. The first and most dramatic part of the film, "Brothers", is a series of sharp clashes. That part reveals Trubnikov as a leader and a catalyst of popular energy. The film derives its tension from the fact that two lines of action—the active element as epitomised by Egor Trubnikov and the temporarily passive latent element as embodied by the masses—find a form of interaction. Mutual understanding does not come about immediately, and some people (like his brother Semyon) remain passive to the last. But the main concern of the film is to show the people resurgent and displaying

qualities which were in abeyance.

Egor Trubnikov, of course, bears the marks of his time. But he is a very original personality and type of leader. The film never leaves Trubnikov out of focus. That enables the authors to emphasise the organising mission of the hero and his influence on people. It will readily be seen that Marko Bessmertny in Stelmakh's play is in a different relationship to the masses and their more active members such as old man Evmen, the collective farmer Gaishchuk, and the boy Fedko. Marko Bessmertny expresses in concentrated form the different traits which are to be found in individual types of the people. To use Gorky's words, the image of Marko Bessmertny is based on the principle, the broader the basis the taller and the brighter the summit. The authors of *The Chairman* have demonstrated a different approach to describing a character of the people, an approach in which his individuality is stressed.

"What is a characteristic feature?" wrote Vsevolod Ivanov. "It means particular, original, and characteristic. It is not, say, a general quality of being able to eat. Nor is it a specific quality, as, for example, being a chemist or a carpenter. A person can have a passion for a craft or a science, i. e., be a carpenter or a chemist, but then his being a carpenter or a chemist stems from his passion and not from the accident of profession, as when a person is an artist without having the slightest aptitude for art. The specific can, in fact, be at odds with character and originality: one can be a writer and hate one's profession and even one's talent. (A rare case, unfortunately, but such things happen. A note for posterity.—*Vs. Iv.*). The characteristic in appearance can be opposed to inner characteristics or they may coincide.

"Whether in the past (history) or in the present (fiction) or the future, everything, object or person, are concentrated, hence, reveal their character, *in their function. The meaning of life and its path, reality is in the purpose of the object which we have noticed. This is the meaning: the purpose of art is beauty, that of science is truth, and that of human activity, justice*" (emphasis added—*V. N.*).

I think this statement of Vsevolod Ivanov is the artist's illustration of Lenin's profound statement that the whole meaning and the special character of a novel, its *focus*, is the individual features of character and the analysis of

particular situations. If we bear this in mind we see that Egor Trubnikov derives his specific individual quality from his *mission*, which is to champion justice. The dramatic action in *The Chairman* keeps the viewer convinced of the need for Egor Trubnikov to intervene actively and promptly in the affairs of the farm, convinced that the village of Konkovo would benefit from immediate *action* of the hero. The hero may make mistakes and may be rude and impulsive but nobody doubts the need for him to act. Nor does anybody doubt his sincerity and his pure motives and aspirations.

The superb actor Mikhail Ulyanov invests the character of Trubnikov with remarkable charm. But the authors do not idealise the hero. They show him as he is, warts and all, with all the rough edges of his impetuous character. They stress that Egor Trubnikov is not always right. Sometimes he sets too high standards for himself and other people, and he cannot forgive human foibles. When he offends newly-weds, rudely reminds Sergei of his mistake and refuses to attend the wedding, the viewer comes to regard him with caution. And the makers of the film are not inclined to ascribe this behaviour to the strength of his character. The woman who loves him, Nadya, is saddened by Egor Trubnikov's behaviour. She says: "Oh, you will yet feel lonely, Egor. Perhaps it's because you are strong that you can behave in this way, but must you treat people like that?"

Egor Trubnikov is a product of his time and he embodies its positive and negative features. His humanism sometimes takes a rough edge to it. A strong hero, he comes out as a little flat in some episodes. His will is like an arrowhead of a compass and it is directed to a single end which is to release the energy of the masses and to restore the shaken belief in the collective farm system. And he can be cruel, brusque and intolerant in his drive. The authors of the film seem to say: one must be human, the masses need not only strong will and strictness but also Leninist kindness and humanity. However, the film is not always consistent.

Egor Trubnikov, like the whole film, appears contradictory: sometimes too harsh and cold. The authors deliberately, it seems, deprive him of an ability to experience the simple joys of life. They emphasise the tragic and unhappy facts of his life. He has lost an arm in the war. His first wife was a narrow-minded mean woman. And the authors forego

an opportunity to add different colours to the portrayal of their hero. For example, Trubnikov tells Semyon that he is sorry he has no children. Later on we learn from the film that a son is born to him, but what do we see on the screen? Trubnikov's face radiating happiness? The joys and delights of the father? No. The authors prefer to show the illness and death of Trubnikov's son. They concentrate attention on the tragic side of life.

And yet the film on the whole does not leave a bleak impression. It is optimistic. Egor Trubnikov finds a way to the hearts of the people and enlists their efforts to enhance the collective farm. He is by no means a lone tragic figure. As a communist, he cannot be happy unless his people are happy. And that makes Egor Trubnikov similar to many positive heroes, including Marko Bessmertny. Although drawn by different means, these characters are both in their way powerfully affecting.

The authors of *The Chairman* were not fully consistent, either, in depicting the contradictions of reality and the triumph of the new. At the end of Part II all the contradictions are resolved as if by a magic wand. A collective farm devastated by the war and ruined by wasteful farming suddenly becomes a flowering agro-city of the future. We do not see the acute struggle and the efforts exerted by Egor Trubnikov and other progressive people in order to make the farm an advanced agricultural complex. The dramatic tension which reveals the strength of Trubnikov is replaced by complacency. The camera pans over the agricultural complex. There are closeups of the newly-built cowhouse, the beaming faces of farmers, and the neat pretty cottages of the village of Konkovo. All that overshadows the figure of the man who had given so much energy and will in order to improve the collective farm. Unity of typical characters and typical circumstances is broken. One gets the impression that all the difficulties have been left behind, all the questions have been resolved, and the contrast between the former war-ravaged collective farm Rassvet and the new agricultural complex with its industrial sweep is somewhat too striking. As a result the final scenes lack in dramatic force. The realism and drive typical of the film as a whole, are replaced by an idyll.

The theme of labour dominates Soviet writings and is treated poetically.

Oles Honchar in his novel *The Tronka* brings lusty colours to draw the picture of the building of the canal and the portraits of bulldozer operators. Their work embodies the beauty, spirituality and the bodily strength and robustness of the Soviet man. The writer cannot take his eyes off the people who are committed to the building of the canal and know that their work is useful to other people, to the nation, to the collective farm and to themselves. The portraits of bulldozer men in Honchar's novel are drenched not only in the southern sun, reminding one of Saryan's paintings, but also in the fire of their hearts. They are swept ahead by enthusiasm.

"Braga eats silently and seriously. His face is beaten by wind and sun and there are telltale crow's-feet around his eyes, withnesses of a hard life. 'All my life I was always on the frontline because it's the best policy,' " he says about himself jokingly. He is the leader of the bulldozer team, a former demolition man in partisan units and now a foremost construction worker. He is matched by his wife Katerina who shares with him all his life's struggles but never grumbles and is always cheerful. They live with dignity because they are confident that they live and work honestly. The description of labour in Oles Honchar's novel is inseparable from the moral characteristic of a person.

In *The Tronka* Honchar shows that the young people entering a life of labour come to understand the dignity of simple people and their moral beauty. The young characters identify themselves with their people who are the creators of all the earth's beauty.

Lina Yatsuba, a tenth-grade pupil, has found her place in life by joining the bulldozer construction team. She is carried away by the general enthusiasm and she realises that man at work can be beautiful in spite of all the difficulties. Her heart, chilled by alienation, mellows and she comes to "feel comfortable among all these shoulders and faces; she enjoys putting her gentle, delicate, tired hands next to their work-hardened hands on the control levers. 'It is in these hands that all the strength and wealth of the working man lies, it is with these hands that they earn not only their

bread but also an opportunity not to toady or lie to anyone. It is these bruised hands that give a person the right to live without lying or sycophancy...'”

The theme of labour is treated in a new way. It is seen as the main sphere in which the new features of the Soviet man and his sterling moral qualities are manifested.

The characters in Vladimir Fomenko's novel *The Memory of the Soil* work with élan as if going into battle for a new life. They are planting vineyards, working at night by the light of floodlights because they must take advantage of the moisture in the soil and plant the saplings in time. District Party Secretary Golikov is involved in the common effort, and he is happy to be able to withstand the mad pace of work, to merge with the masses and carry out the difficult job without apparent effort. He feels part of the great force that transforms the world:

“...He was getting second wind. His strength increased by the minute. The quicker the sweat dried—the sweat raised by the heat of his untrained muscles unused for fieldwork, but already overcoming weariness and despair—the more an exultant feeling swelled in his body—a very young, perhaps still a growing and vigorous body, which so often and so unnaturally stiffened in long committee sessions.

“‘Strike!’ shouted Lavr Kuzmich (the head of the workers in the field—V. N.). And Sergei responded, timing his breathing with that of the barefoot women teachers, the young Vantsetskaya and the hefty Dashka Chernenkova. All of them struck as if they were bowing, dazzling him with their breasts bobbing in the v-necks, with their white untanned ankles. They were working along with old men and children; it was clear to Sergei that had this planting outing been an official occasion complete with supervisors (called American overseers by local folks) defiling with their hands in their pockets, work would not have been such fun and the effort would have been killed by the long smoking breaks taken by the old men, and the endless waddling trips of women across the field for a tankard of water.”

Nastasia Schepetkova becomes beautiful, strong, and adroit in work. She is chairman of the collective farm, not a very young woman but preserving the élan of youth. Fomenko admires these heroes who are going about their work with such zest. He shows that this quality is inherent

in a working man who is not showing off yet is proud of his prowess. The pictures which praise man at work have an inner pace which conveys precise and efficient movements:

"She plunged the shovel into the soil until her foot hit the ground, overturned a large piece, dropped it turf down, roots upward, struck it with the blade to break it, and began to press and chisel as if it were play to her. This was the fashion in the now past machineless times, when the men did not sit on tractors or in offices, but would use their wooden ploughs on grapevines, displayed their prowess with the axe, and the girls, and even married women, for their part, tried to hold their own against the boys, even if their hands drooped and their backs ached—they sailed from hole to hole looking as light as down pretending it was no effort as was the custom on vineyards since the time of their grandmothers...

"And Schepetkova recalled that and tried to sail in the same manner. Without hurry, without, of all things, silly fussiness but as if for fun and for her own sport sprinkling the water."

Fomenko vividly shows the enthusiasm generated by work and by the need to "storm nature". But he also gives us an attractive picture of industrial work in agriculture using powerful machinery. As a result, the landscape and the very notion of farm labour changes, reflecting new features which have become part of our reality:

"Each C-80 towed a wheeled frame with six sowers attached to every frame—and not the horse-drawn low and short ones, but powerful tractor-drawn sowers each with 24 pairs of discs. These machines moved across a plain stretching from horizon to horizon, and towed rows of rollers, chains, and harrows, and all this was chanking and clinking and raising dust...

"Lifting the lid, Nastasia cast a glance at the wheat pouring out. The hoppers were of equal size and the wheat came out in an even stream..."

Sergei Krutilin in *Lipyagi* poeticises hard-working peasants and draws a lyrical portrait of a mother who has to work day and night. Her heart does not grow callous because of all the hard work. On the contrary, she treats other people with affection, sympathy and concern. Like all the other positive characters of Krutilin she despises spongers.

The writer admires the mother's beautiful hands which

shirked no work and yet remained tender and gentle.

The character of mother in Krutilin's story is drawn with filial affection.

And the same affection marks his portrayal of his sister Maria. Her life has not shaped up very happily. The author emphasises Maria's respect for the job she is doing at the dairy farm. It is a hard job. But in spite of everything she spends all her time there and misses the farm very much when she is transferred to another and easier job. She is a typical hard-working peasant woman.

In Alexeyev's *Bread Is a Noun* the poetry of labour is blended with the portrayal of the best features of the positive characters. This is the way Zhuravushka is portrayed.

The character of this woman is vivid and robust precisely because it fits the people's idea of beauty which was described in his time by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. She not only looks beautiful, she is beautiful to look at when she works.

The work of Soviet people and their thoughts and dreams are the staple food and a source of inspiration for our artists. Let us remember how all these features were valued by Maxim Gorky, Alexander Fadeyev, Alexander Dovzhenko and other major Soviet artists. I do not want to bore you with quotations. Let me just say this. When you read such books as Krutilin's *Lipyagi*, Alexeyev's *Bread Is a Noun*, and Stelmakh's *Truth and Untruth*—all the books which reveal the best qualities of the Soviet people and their exploits performed during the Soviet period and which give a poetic picture, among other things, of the peasant woman—one cannot help saying, after Alexander Dovzhenko: take off your hats and bow before our woman who has borne on her shoulders the enormous trials of war and has preserved her beauty.

V

The validity of the Communist Party's agricultural policy stems from its correct premises. It is based on precise Leninist understanding of the objective laws of development, on accurate knowledge of the state, the needs, and the potential of the socialist farming. In socialist society, the subjective factor becomes an objective material force

provided it accords with the laws of development, the objective state of things, provided it increases and not destroys the existing opportunities.

Soviet art, at its best, can undoubtedly be credited with showing the new phenomena in farm life, in the work of Party organisations in rural areas and the growing application of science to farming, the growing involvement of the masses, objective assessment of conditions and introduction of advanced farming methods. All this is shown truthfully and with historical accuracy in the essays of Efim Dorosh, in Fomenko's novel *The Memory of the Soil*, in Shundik's novel *In the Blue-Eyed Land*, to name just a few recent works.

This is not to say that agriculture today has no problems and contradictions. The Party clearly points to that in its documents concerned with agriculture. These contradictions can be due to various reasons, both objective (bad weather, lack of some types of agricultural machines, survivals of private property attitudes, and the presence of two different types of property, state and cooperative, in agriculture) and subjective (inability of some leaders to use the opportunities offered by the collective-farm system; faulty agricultural methods; arbitrary planning; not enough incentives to farmers, etc.).

Soviet literature has always been closely linked with the life of the collective farms and reacted sharply to all the processes taking place there. Nor was it merely recording facts. On the contrary, by breaking new ground, Soviet literature raised some questions which urgently awaited solution.

As far as the objective causes of contradictions are concerned, I would single out the description by Soviet writers of the hangovers of private property relations which are still manifested in different ways in rural life.

Alexeyev's story *Bread Is a Noun* has the following words: "The great battle between the collective and the private which got under way in the countryside in the thirties, continues in the sixties without abating for a minute. The private in this thirty-year-old war now preserves only tiny patches as bridgeheads which are comparable to a Noah's Ark, to which Father Leonid, his brothers and sisters (Believers—V. N.) still cling. But no matter how small these enclaves may be they cannot be smashed at one stroke."

The film *The Chairman*, Alexeyev's story *Bread Is a Noun* and Krutilin's novel *Lipyagi* show that private instincts in the village are tenacious.

Alexeyev vividly portrays the gift of mimicry displayed by a man of property. The former collective-farm chairman Vassili Markelov had been regarded for most of his past life as an active farmer. He was intent on distinguishing himself at any cost and before the war occupied the post of village Soviet chairman. At the front he was also less concerned with fighting than getting citations. And upon return to his village he weaseled his way into chairmanship of the collective farm. He was beginning to enjoy his new post but suddenly his career was ruined because he was accused of arbitrary acts (he wanted to feed the cattle left without fodder at the expense of the collective farmers), and was sentenced to two years in prison.

After serving his sentence, Markelov devoted all his considerable will and doggedness to indulging his lust for gain. In an unbelievably short time his farmstead was full of cattle: a cow and a filly, a dozen or so sheep and goats, and poultry. He kept a two-years stock of hay cut on collective-farm grasslands and he would not think twice to grab anything that came his way.

Markelov developed a special theory to justify his chase of wealth: "I am creating the material basis. Everybody knows that communism cannot be built without a material basis."

The author exposes the mentality of a latter-day man of property and shows that Markelov is an antipode of conscious and active farmers such as Akimushka, Egor Grushin, Merkidon Lyushnya, Zhuravushka, and Apollon Styshnoi. All his thoughts are about personal gain and not about multiplying the wealth of the collective farm.

The social harm done by the erosive passion for gain is shown in Anatoli Kalinin's story "The Echo of War" and Sergei Krutilin's *Lipyagi*. Here is Ignat Starbin, a burglar and murderer, facing trial in *Lipyagi*. Sergei Krutilin shows the beastly nature of that inveterate man of property who has adapted himself to the new order. Ignat Starbin reminds one of Yakov Ostrovnov in Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*, only he is more crude and less circumspect in his actions, and he lives at a time when the collective farm system has prevailed. Appointed bursar of the collective farm, he began

to grow rich at the farm's expense. In the hard years when many families could barely make both ends meet, Ignat built himself a new house, and a large barn of birch logs, surrounding them with a palisade like a fortress. Ignat somehow managed to make himself indispensable on the farm. He could get along with any collective-farm chairman. His speeches at meetings were few but always carried weight, and all the while he was garnering in his fortress whatever collective-farm property he could lay his hands on.

Eventually his lust for gain leads him to break the farm's safe. Caught red-handed, he does not repent...

"He spat furiously on the floor and suddenly yelled:

" 'I hate everyone of you! ... I've long hated you... I know what's in store for me. That's why I don't mind telling you that I hate you! From my young age I have humbled myself before you. I bowed to you when you put an extra copeck in the church plate. I used to collect candle stubs after you. I put them out with my fingers so that they should not burn up. I made new candles and sold them. You bought them. That meant an extra copeck. I saved every copeck. I wanted to live decently! And I would have lived decently... I had fifteen thousand during the NEP. But for the collective farm you would be licking my feet now... At first I waited. I thought communism would collapse very soon. But then I saw that it was not collapsing. And then I nursed my grievances and began to take revenge on you for my failure in life. I decided to burn the village. And I nearly did it! Remember in 1931 on Eastertide... It was me who set the village on fire... It was me! ' "

The scene of the trial has dramatism about it. Ignat's speech causes a general uproar.

The makers of the film *The Chairman* also convey the devastating force of property mentality with considerable artistic impact. The actor Ivan Lapikov gives a graphic portrait of Semyon, Egor Trubnikov's brother. I would take issue with those critics who assert that the conflict between the Trubnikov brothers is more characteristic of the thirties than of the present time and that Semyon embodies the features which are hardly ever met with nowadays. I think they overlook the fact that the main thing for art is to reveal the specific forms in which a phenomenon exists and not only to describe what is most widespread. Which brings us to a more complex question: Is it true that the pernicious

effect of the sense of property is no longer relevant and art need not fight it? "Theatre is not a mirror," said Vladimir Mayakovsky, "but a magnifying lense." With great psychological flair, actor Ivan Lapikov reveals the tragedy of a man poisoned with the lust for gain. He draws a complex character. At bottom, Semyon still preserves some good features. But they have been eclipsed by his instinct for gain, his viciousness, and his resentment of everything new.

The film sees the clash of strong characters, each carrying an important message. That helps to dramatise the main idea of the film.

By probing life, Soviet writers try to understand both the objective and the subjective factors behind the contradictions in the life of the collective farm, raise acute questions on whose solutions the development of agriculture depends. A characteristic example is Pyotr Proskurin's novel *Bitter Grass*. It shows the life of the village against the background of the overall situation in the country, the life of the regional capital of Ostoret'sk, the work of the regional Party committee, and the events at the agricultural machines factory. The author focuses attention on the changes in the mass mentality since the war. It is to be regretted that Proskurin does not always succeed in bringing the numerous plot lines of the novel in line with the general idea and in achieving composition harmony and balance.

The main merit of the novel is the ardent desire of the characters to improve the collective farm. The author has come up with memorable portraits of collective-farm chairman Stepan Lobov, the Regional Party Secretary Derbachev and engineer Dmitri Polyakov. He shows that all the positive heroes, each in keeping with his own character, are working in the same direction and trying to solve the question which engages all of us: how to improve life in the countryside and develop Soviet agriculture still more.

Proskurin's novel *Bitter Grass*, like the film *The Chairman*, is harsh and austere in depicting the hardship that befell rural folk in the postwar period. The resemblance is all the more striking because the novel, like the film, is set in a middle Russian village ravaged by the war. True, the novel has no central figure which organises and propels the story as is the case in original character of the farm chairman Stepan Lobov, which does not appear in later parts. Such development has an inherent logic to it. In the second

and third parts the object of portrayal changes. Other characters move into the foreground: the Regional Party secretaries Derbachev and Borisova. They are in conflict with each other, which enables the author to show the clash of two approaches to managing agriculture in post-war period.

The conflict between Derbachev and Yulia Borisova unfolds against a sweeping social background. We learn about the life stories of the characters, are able to trace how their personalities were shaped and are told about their world views and private lives. But the author's main concern is to show the intellectual life of the main protagonists which is manifested in practical affairs and their different views on what constitutes the essence of Party work.

Those critics who admonish Pyotr Proskurin for making his characters too rational must be reminded that these characters belong to a special intellectual type. The author has not invented them, he has taken them from real life. The conflict between Derbachev and Yulia Borisova is made more dramatic by the fact that both of them are dedicated Party workers. Their intellects, strong characters and convictions are manifested in Party work, which is the main meaning of their lives.

In some ways, the conflict between Yulia Borisova and Derbachev is reminiscent—plotwise—of the conflict between Valgan and Bakhirev, in spite of the differences between them. The social essence of the conflict is in any case the same: Yulia Borisova's style of work reflects many of the faults of the so-called administrative method of leadership. Derbachev embodies the genuinely creative Party principles. His character and actions prove the invincible strength of the Leninist foundations of the Soviet system. The similarities of the situations in essentially different works of art are due to the similarities of the processes described in the two novels.

But if one pursues the comparison of the novels by Proskurin and Galina Nikolayeva, one finds a significant difference in the approach these writers take in describing their characters and events. A large theme calls for a general view and vivid characters. It is necessary to bring the individual world of the heroes in harmony with their social attitudes to create an image that distills—in a highly individual form—the essential features of Soviet life. This is a hard

task. Proskurin, therefore, emphasises not the characters but the circumstances which brought forth different types of heroes.

His novel at times reminds one of an essay recording the history of a collective farm or a factory. All this, of course, expands the narrative and enables the author to cover events of the Great Patriotic War (the story of Dmitri Polyakov and his mother), the partisan movement (the story of Yulia Borisova), the organisation of the collective farm (the story of Stepan Lobov), the building of power dams, the conflict between Borisova and Derbachev, and so on. But in broadening the scope of his narrative, the author forgets that there must be inner artistic harmony between the description of characters and their inner world, and the description of circumstances. Sometimes this harmony is lacking (not, by the way, a rare thing in contemporary Soviet literature which has many "fat" novels in which description of circumstances overshadows the images of the heroes).

But at its best, Proskurin's novel does achieve harmony between description of characters and circumstances and then it is impossible to separate the events described in the novel from the stormy passions, thoughts, and feelings of the characters and the ideas for which they are crusading. This applies most of all to the character of Derbachev.

Derbachev is superior to Borisova not only in the scope and power of his intellect and strength of his character but also in his life experience. He has risen from the grassroots and has passed through a hard school of life. He became prominent in Party work and held some responsible posts, including work at the Central Committee of the CPSU. Derbachev is a true character of the people who combines native intelligence with strong character and imagination. Derbachev is an impulsive man but he thinks carefully. He never jumps to conclusions and always proceeds from profound knowledge of facts.

When he comes to Ostoret'sk, Derbachev follows the same style of Party work. As always, he begins by taking a profound look at the local economy. Before putting to the Party meeting the question of the unsatisfactory state of agriculture in the region he goes on a fact-finding trip to the collective farms, takes counsel with the people, talks to old people, and to the collective-farm chairman Stepan Lobov.

Proceeding from real facts he suggests measures to improve agriculture and he commits all the élan and energy of a Bolshevik to implementing these measures.

Derbachev is anxious to find a correct balance between the personal and social principles in the life of the farm and wants to offer material incentives to the farmers. He urges the need for the collective farmers to show more initiative and to resist heavy-handed interference in the planning of the farm production.

In Proskurin's novel these "production questions" provide focal points of the plot which reveal the attitudes of characters and their thoughts and acts. It is true that his characters mostly talk about economic matters: about harvests, sowing, and crops, about improving livestock farming, etc. These questions are very hotly debated. And the conversation is interesting not only in professional terms. At issue is a vital problem on which the destiny of many people depends. Hence the dramatism of the situations in which the characters reveal their individual features and individual views. That is why, in spite of long-drawn-out dialogues on political and economic themes and a documentary approach to the description of circumstances and acts of the heroes, these scenes carry an emotional charge.

Yulia Borisova belongs to a younger generation than Derbachev. It is a complex and not entirely coherent character. As a Party worker, she is the product of the 1940s. In her own way she is an honest and dedicated Party member. During the war she was active in the partisan movement and bravely fulfilled some dangerous assignments. Then she spent years studying and working as a Party official.

Borisova is a woman of duty. But her notion of duty is so straightforward that even in her pure and tender relationship with Dmitri Polyakov, a war victim, she wants to proceed not as her love prompts her but as her duty bids her, on the "I *must* act so" principle. Everything she says she says with conviction. But there is something cold in the very justice of what she says. Behind the principles she loses sight of life and man. And in the final analysis, the great changes in this country are aimed at improving the individual.

Borisova is not an uncommon human type. To use an accepted formula one can say that Borisova has both

positive and negative features. But the dialectic of the general and the particular in that character is rather more complex than that. The author shows that under certain circumstances positive features can turn into their opposite. Derbachev has a radically different notion of duty and of what makes the essence of Party work.

To put it in a nutshell, Derbachev believes that all his work and his life are for his people. Derbachev thinks that the people who are building a new life are entitled to material well-being and he energetically looks for ways to combine the personal and public interests in the life of the collective farm. He declares it to be the communist principle of labour. By contrast, Yulia Borisova believes that everything should be subordinate to duty and that the people, hence, individuals, are working in the name of the future and not of the present.

Among the merits of Proskurin's novel is the subtle portrayal of the acute struggle over Derbachev's proposal to provide greater material incentives for collective farmers and over Borisova's proposal to build a power dam at the expense of the farms which would then make it possible to make a great stride towards communism.

In my view, the greatest artistic impact is produced by those chapters in Proskurin's novel which show with psychological insight the struggle of Derbachev and his supporters to uphold the view that agriculture should develop in accordance with its real opportunities. Derbachev commits all his emotions and his strength as a genuine communist to this struggle. He comes out against voluntaristic methods of leadership.

Like most major modern works, Proskurin's novel shows the fruitful changes brought about in the Ostoret'sk province by the Party's measures. The reader sees clearly how slowly and painfully the characters look for new ways to tackle complex problems. The author seems to say that life is more complex than we sometimes think. For new and correct principles to prevail some time must pass and, most important, collective efforts, intense and dedicated work, and struggle for correct principles are required.

The life story of Borisova, as portrayed in the novel, may give rise to some argument. In the third part of the novel the main attention is concentrated on showing that the heroine can be changed. It is an interesting idea which

has been prompted to the author by observations of real life.

But the author fails to show the moral upheavals which could convince the reader that important changes are really taking place in Borisova's mind, that she has drawn some lessons and has come to understand that her previous life and work had been guided by a wrong ideal. And without a moral upheaval the character cannot be transformed, as the experience of classic writers, especially Lev Tolstoy, convinces us.

Even in the third part of the novel, Borisova in many ways remains her cold rationalistic self. The events of nation-wide impact do not produce a moral upheaval in her and do not affect her deeply enough. For example, she realises that building a power dam at the collective farms' expense is crippling for the farms which cannot afford to finance a major construction project. But that does not cause her to reappraise her attitude to life. The author again has Borisova clash with Derbachev, who advises her to quit her work at the Party committee and take a long hard look at what is happening around her. Borisova becomes close with Dmitri Polyakov, and that holds out a promise of her being "transformed". But with her excessively rationalistic attitude to life the character in the third part of the novel loses emotional impact and becomes artistically unconvincing.

Dmitri Polyakov is perhaps the most memorable character in the book *Bitter Grass*. He lives an unusual life. He returns from a nazi concentration camp a very ill man. The nazis had "experimented" on him and subjected him to terrible torture as a result of which Dmitri Polyakov completely lost his memory and willpower. His home has been destroyed, his mother, who took an active part in the partisan movement, has been hanged by the Germans. He is so ill that he cannot connect the inscription on a monument to his mother with his mother's name although lurking in the back of his mind there is a vague feeling that the name of the heroic partisan is somehow relevant to his life. But his tragic experience is not the most important thing about Dmitri Polyakov because later on he gets rid of his illness and becomes an ordinary young man working at an agricultural machines factory. Eventually he becomes an engineer. The most important thing is that the description of that

character blends with the main events described in the novel. These events leave a deep mark in Dmitri Polyakov's heart. The events in which Dmitri is involved are treated in a unique emotional key which enables the author to make the character at once individual and typical. In this lies the special truthfulness of that image.

The war has inflicted a double wound on Dmitri Polyakov. When he finds himself at his grandfather's village, Dmitri sees the run-down postwar farm and is doing his best to help it. He is immersed in the life of the grassroots. The warmth which the Soviet people lavished on the victims of war, proves an excellent remedy for him. These links with simple and hearty people are deepened when he works at the factory and develops personal relationships with fellow-workers in the course of which the best features of his character are brought out.

When the Party assigns him to work as collective-farm chairman at the local collective farm he agrees. Trained as an engineer, he begins by studying the positive experience which the former chairman of the collective farm, Stepan Lobov, had bequeathed to the farm. He tries to implement the measures proposed by Derbachev when the latter was Regional Party secretary. He finds a common language with the villagers and becomes one of them. He joins the collective farmers in reorganising the farm.

It can be said that this character reflects many typical features of our Soviet contemporary, an active builder of a new life. Proskurin's novel gives a broad panorama of life and is marked by confidence in the inexhaustible potential of the collective-farm system. Thanks to the efforts of the Party and the collective farmers rural life sweepingly improves.

VI

Soviet writers who focus attention on the new processes in the life of collective farms come upon untapped human wealth. Many of these books are structured so as to show the involvement of the people and their growing consciousness as the main condition for the renewal of life. As a rule, the communists, the advanced people, are proponents of the new who spearhead the people's efforts. Soviet

writers seek to look into the inner world of the characters, to describe them vividly, and to show the victory of new attitudes in the countryside as an inevitable, historically predetermined process. Their profound historical insight and psychological flair, and the expressiveness of individualised human types combine to produce significant works. An interesting example is offered by the novel of Jonas Avyžius entitled *Village at a Crossroads*.

The author describes the atmosphere of collective-farm life in the Baltic Republics which embarked on collectivisation later than the other Soviet Republics. In solid realistic tradition he describes the circumstances, carefully traces his characters' emotional evolution, and appraises each of their acts. His novel brings considerable psychological acuity to describing the characters. The plot is full of conflicts, revealing the contradictions characteristic of the Lithuanian rural life. A concrete historical approach helps the author to show *the particular*, for example, to emphasise the signs of continuing class struggle made very complex by the system of separated farmsteads and by quarrels not only between former wealthy and poor peasants but also between the inhabitants of the village and of the farmsteads.

Avyžius raises some key problems and tries to combine the picture of conflicts with the description of the moral makeup of the characters, to show that advanced people are guided by the ideas of humanism and at the same time to condemn those who try to check that movement, are imprisoned by prejudice and are incapable of keeping abreast of the times.

As the novel's title suggests, it shows a great turning point in the life of the contemporary Lithuanian farmers. The plot develops in a rather unusual way. Events are brought to a climax and then, just as the contradictions are revealed in sharp relief, they are abandoned. The conflicts remain unresolved.

In the final pages of the novel, Avyžius, while acknowledging that difficulties still persist, tries nevertheless to reveal the strength of the new attitudes which are taking hold of people's minds, and creates a revolution in their feelings and thoughts, making them reappraise their previous life, assume a new point of view and adopt a new line of behaviour.

The central figure is an active hero with a strong charac-

ter and clear goal. Avyžius does not idealise his hero. The new collective-farm chairman, Arvidas Toleikis, is at times too heavy-handed and callous with people, and he is not attentive to his wife Ieva. Even so, the author's sympathies are on the side of the hero. Toleikis manages to introduce some new practices which meet the interests of the collective farmers (acting in accordance with the objective conditions, the principle of having the farm pay its own way, the use of modern farming methods, and adherence to the law of combining the personal and national interests in the life of the collective farmers). Toleikis acts along lines which collective farmers approve of. He is a catalyst of their growing awareness and civic sense.

Unlike Proskurin in his novel *Bitter Grass*, Avyžius in his novel does not resort to publicistic digressions and never becomes a spokesman for his characters. He paints living portraits of the collective farmers (the impulsive and hot-headed Galgalis, the frank, pure, and outspoken Biruté, the slow-moving solid blacksmith Raudonikis), he shows their emotions, and their confrontations with other people. The author always shows the motives of his characters, looks into their past, describes the present, and tries to project the future. He reveals the *potential* of man in describing the confrontations and events. The question of the innovations which Toleikis is trying to introduce brings up the notions of duty, honesty and integrity, and thus acquires a moral dimension. It provides a frame of reference in judging different types of behaviour. The characters are revealed from inside. The hero comes across as a living personality and at the same time expresses a certain social trend.

The reader sees how in the complex conditions of a Lithuanian farm (by no means an advanced one) the new attitudes bring dramatic changes to all the spheres of life. The writer sharpens the contradictions and the experiences of the characters. And he boldly introduces comic situations into his dramatic narrative. That enables him to show the struggle between the new and the old in all its complexity.

One recalls the episode in which active collective farmers clash with Lapinis, a former wealthy peasant who has infiltrated the farm. The clash occurs over the question of whether farmers should make manure available for use on the collective-farm fields. A tight knot of contradictions is revealed in a single episode: contradictions within the

family (the relations of Morté Rimša, a former farm labourer of Lapinis and his mistress—with the collective farmers and with Lapinis himself), in social life (the contradiction between the village and farmstead peasants), and collective-farm affairs (the mistake of Toleikis who insists that Lukas Rimša, who has a big family, give away his second cow). The situation is made more dramatic by the impulsive actions of Galgalis who breaks into Lapinis's yard and requisitions the manure. Lapinis takes advantage of his rash act in order to set the village peasants against the farmsteaders. Morté Rimša engages in a scuffle with the activist farmers (a comic scene ensues). Toleikis "blows his top" and takes drastic action forgetting about the personal interests of the collective farmers. A quarrel over a relative trifle develops into a clash with far-reaching implications.

At the peak of the conflict, Avyžius makes a sharp turn in the narrative to show the strength of the new which triumphs over the old without any outside interference.

When passions reach an explosive pitch and even Toleikis can do nothing to reconcile the sides (on the contrary, Lapinis takes advantage of his speech in order to foment hatred for the collective-farm manager) another character comes to the foreground. She is Biruté, Morte Rimša's daughter by Lapinis. The best cowmaid in the farm, a pure and honest soul, she has long been unhappy about the goings-on at the collective farm. She hates Lapinis who grabs collective farm property, she is ashamed of her mother who caves in to her former master and lover. Bold and resolute, Biruté exposes Lapinis and shows the collective farmers where he has hidden a cow which he pretends to have surrendered to the state. It is not just the triumph of the good forces. In this episode the essence of contradictions and of every protagonist becomes apparent. Thus, change brings contradictions to a head and the new reveals its strength.

All the key events in the novel of Avyžius are shown as complex tangles of contradictions in which the new is seen clearly. This applies to the scenes of an attempt on the life of Toleikis organised by Lapinis; Biruté's leaving the family; the anxieties of Goda who knows about the crimes of her foster-father Lapinis; the confrontation between the collective-farm's Party organiser Grigas and the representative of the regional Party committee Navikas over plans for the

sowing season; the worries of Martynas who has made some grave mistakes.

A very important feature of the novel is that the inner upheavals of the characters are shown in the light of the new and are related to their attitude to the ongoing change. The characters respond to the contradictions in their own way and represent different types of human behaviour. The writer is concerned with the question of a character's responsibility for his actions, for his choice of his place in life and his allegiances in the midst of sharp contradictions.

The kulak Lapinis is a very complex and a highly individual character. The author emphasises that old hidebound attitudes cause the tragedy of a person who has set himself up against the collective farm. Lapinis is a penetrating study into the psychology of a class enemy and it carries important implications. There is something about the novel of *Avyzius* which reminds one of Gorky, as when he describes how the lust for property desiccates the mind of Lapinis and leads him to commit a crime.

The writer looks closely at the inner world of the positive characters (Toleikis, Biruté, and Grigas). He shows how by committing themselves to social change they become larger personalities and acquire new qualities. The positive heroes of *Avyzius* also meet with their trials, overcome obstacles and experience personal upheavals. They are shown in evolution and their best qualities are revealed through their struggle for the new order.

This is true of the central hero, Toleikis. He meets with a series of trials in his personal and public life. While preserving his innate strength of character and determination, he rises to a higher stage as an individual, becomes wiser, and more humane. This explains the influence which Toleikis has on the masses. He is like a power source which attracts those around him. People change under his influence and he himself changes. He spots Morté's talent for needlework and sends a specimen of it to an exhibition. This brings about a change in Morté. She breaks with Lapinis, sheds the burden which had sat on her shoulders for years and becomes a different person. The writer shows how small things reflect the larger trend, namely, the growing consciousness of the masses. This process involves broad strata of the people, including those who seem to have resigned to circumstances. As a result of the new

measures introduced by Toleikis the collective farm is burgeoning.

In the structure of the novel, Toleikis is opposed not only by Lapinis, who is a class enemy (that reflects the historical circumstances of the Lithuanian countryside), but also by Martynas, who is a different type of leader than himself. That opposition carries an ideological message.

The writer condemns Martynas for being weak and spineless, and makes him brood over his setbacks. And the feelings of Martynas which reflect the real contradictions of life, suggest a lesson. Martynas becomes aware of his *responsibility* for his acts. The process of his evolution as a character is not completed in the novel. He continues to make mistakes, allows himself to be bullied by Navikas and upsets the sowing schedule.

Avyžius shows that the mistakes made by Martynas are due less to circumstances than to his personal shortcomings. Circumstances (if understood as reflecting the social setup) call forth such types as Toleikis. Artistically, Martynas embodies a phenomenon uncharacteristic of the collective-farm movement.

That contrast serves to underline the strength of Toleikis. All the healthy forces in the collective farm are attracted to him. That reflects, in an artistic form, a very important idea, namely, that the objective strength of the collective-farm system is embodied in the programme of action followed by Toleikis. Toleikis expresses an objective law which is capable of overcoming any obstacles.

The "framed" composition of the novel (in which the final events seem to repeat the opening events) serves to underline the qualitative changes which the innovatory activities of Toleikis bring to the collective farm.

We see Toleikis walking home from a hospital. What does he see? "The winter crop lined the road on both sides... But the maize sown by Martynas was sparse and puny, not taller than a rooster. A hectare would yield half a cartload at the most. 'There's ready land for winter crops,' Arvidas thought bitterly..."

The contradictions in the behaviour of the two different types of managers are shown through the perceptions of Toleikis. He is poignantly aware of the harm done by people who have lost their sense of duty. But then he cheers up, as he sees the collective farmers gathering hay.

"A girl with her hair hanging loose was perched on a horse-drawn rake gathering hay into rows while the women used their rakes and pitchforks to gather hay into shocks to make things easier for the two men who were loading it on the truck. An adroit sturdy woman (Arvidas did not recognise Magdé Raudonikienė at once) was on top of the haystack. Both men were heaving huge piles on the top of the rick, sometimes trying to throw hay all over her, just for fun, and she had to be pretty nimble to avoid being buried in it." The even pace of the work and the obvious pleasure with which the people are working uplift Toleikis. He sees that his efforts have not been in vain. In spite of the errors of Martynas, people have come to believe in the new mode of living and working.

This is the position with which the author identifies himself. His novel shows convincingly and vividly that the new methods pioneered by Toleikis evoke a ready response among the people and transform their minds. And that augurs well for the collective-farm system.

VII

The rich tradition of the Soviet literature in truthful and profound depiction of changes in the life of the collective farm is carried on today. Fomenko published the first part of his novel *The Memory of the Soil* over ten years ago to favourable reviews. In late 1970 the second part of the novel came out. The writer is very conscientious and goes about his work with great thoroughness. Along with Krutilin's novel *Lipyagi* and Oles Honchar's *The Tronka*, *The Memory of the Soil* is a major landmark in Soviet literature.

Colourful and vigorous language, original characters plucked from the midst of life, and expressive details recreate the life of a collective farm on the Don river in all its diversity. There is accurate period detail, dramatic change, clashes and contradictions many of which are characteristic not only of the late 1940s when the action in the novel takes place, but also of the present time.

Fomenko addresses himself to a problem which is an abiding concern of all Soviet writers about the present, and that is bringing the mentality of the Soviet man in harmony with the surging forward movement which we witness in all

spheres, including rural life.

I think one can speak about Sholokhov's tradition in Fomenko's novel. In fact, he frequently mentions Sholokhov as the writer who comes from the same parts, and the characters often note the similarities of the people they meet with Sholokhov's heroes. But most important of all, Fomenko draws colourful figures of collective farmers, generous people, intelligent with an instinctive sense of the truth—all that is characteristic of an honest and dedicated worker. Generosity and native intelligence are manifested at key moments of history (during the Civil War, the collectivisation, and the Great Patriotic War). That is why the reminiscences about the Civil War, the early days of the commune organised in 1920 by Matvei Schepetkov, about collectivisation and the Great Patriotic War are interlaced with the narrative about the present time. In this way the writer underlines the fact that the creative drive of the former years continues in the late 1940s when a dramatic change occurs in the life of the farm. A well-run and settled in its ways farm is to be moved from fertile floodlands and cultivated soil to a wilderness because of the construction of the Volga-Don canal and the Tsimlyanskaya power dam. At this trying moment all the moral strength which the collective farmers had acquired over the years manifests itself.

Fomenko shows the situation in all its complexity.

He does not invent anything that would complicate the plot. He seems to be giving a factual account of the resettlement of a collective farm from floodlands to a new place. The event itself is highly revealing of all the contradictions of life, both the *old*: survivals of private property attitudes (the Korenevo villagers derived considerable profits from their private gardens), national prejudice (the villagers considered themselves to be true Cossacks and looked down their noses on "aliens"); and *modern* (even the progressive collective farmers cannot face the prospect of being resettled. They understand with their brain that it is necessary but their emotional attachment to their native place is so great that they cannot face the prospect of leaving it). Gerasim Zhivov, a veteran of the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War, an advanced farmer who twice went to the National Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow, leaves the farm and joins a construction site. He is written up in the press as a public-minded person "who had spent his life tilling the

fields but could not resist the call of his heart to join a great construction project. And he would curse reading about himself, while the farm would lose a good farmer”.

The writer is starkly realistic in describing the pitched class battles on the Don river in the past (the collective farm is named after the Civil War hero Matvei Schepetkov, who fought together with Fyodor Podtelkov described in *Quiet Flows the Don*). Impassioned speeches of Schepetkov, recorded by a student who fought in his unit, are quoted in the novel. The writer is also very realistic in describing the curious interweaving of the old and the new in the life and mentality of the villagers.

“Perched on the ridge of a half-demolished barn was its owner, an advanced farm worker and a former nun. Her skirt tucked between her knees and holding the Gospel well away from her eyes behind plastic-rimmed spectacles, she was reading loudly about the angel...

“Down below a bulldozer was roaring, and its driver, a girl in a T-shirt and track pants, was ripping up the wall with the edge of the bulldozer blade. She went about the job gingerly and threatened in a hesitant voice to ram the wall.

“‘Come on, smash it!’ the nun challenged her.

“Her arms outthrust, the nun’s roomer was advancing on the bulldozer... Dishevelled and wild-eyed, she yelled:

“‘Stand off. You’ll be cursed down generations. Down generations.’”

Such graphic details give us an idea of the time and the people, the survivals of the past and the new phenomena. His realistic approach helps the writer to explain the circumstances that made it necessary to start a gigantic construction of the Volga-Don Canal and the irrigation system. The picture of the black sandstorm (“Astrakhan”) is drawn in a manner reminiscent of Oles Honchar’s *Cyclone*, which describes a flood. People are powerless in the face of “Astrakhan”. Telegraph poles are buried in the sand, the wheatstalks are uprooted and the fertile top soil is blown away.

The pictures of the building of the Volga-Don Canal and the Tsimlyanskaya power dam, while an organic part of the narrative, have a distinct mood of their own. They convey the romanticism of creative work, and the dynamism and the expressive style are reminiscent of Katayev’s novel *Time, Forward!*

Stepan Konkin, a veteran of the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War, his assistant Lyuba Fryanskova, and the impulsive and zealous Valentin Golubov are all forward-looking people who have a youthful and unreserved faith in the transformative mission of socialism.

That sets Fomenko's novel apart from those works in which the past, including the late 1940s and early 1950s, was described as the time of arbitrary methods of management and illegal practices which plagued the life of collective farms. In Fomenko's novel the pace of life is dynamic, the country is undergoing dramatic change as witnessed by the nation-wide project carried out to irrigate the arid areas of the South. All the events in the novel are directly or indirectly connected with that focal event. That invests the concrete pictures drawn by the writer with great meaning. The epic element, the main merit of the novel, is felt both in the description of events and in the portrayal of characters. The plotlines describing the life of the villagers and their relations are seen as deriving their drama and importance from the changes sweeping the country. These changes are reflected in the destinies of the people and their behaviour.

Stepan Konkin has tuberculosis, but he is so carried away by the prospect of the construction that he forgets about his ill health and plunges into the thick of events. He feels younger:

"A pneumothorax was long overdue and Stepan Stepanovich's physical strength was waning. But his spirits, on the contrary, were higher and higher. They soared skyhigh. The electric power lines were striding towards the wilderness in what Lenin would certainly have called 'seven-mile strides', the fields were adorned with newly-made canals, the newly-planted forests were about to strike into leaf, and crops were ripening on the first collective-farm field in the Rostov and Stalingrad areas." Stepan Konkin ruins his health and falls like a soldier in a battle to transform his land. He is buried on an empty lot where the central square of a township is to be built on the bank of the man-made Tsimlyansky lake.

Fomenko's novel has a historical perspective. The writer compares the building of the Volga-Don Canal and the Tsimlyanskaya power dam and resettlement of villages to the changes that occurred at turning points in the country's

history. The novel's style is dynamic and forceful, conveying the tension and the heady atmosphere of change depicted in the novel:

"The girls were carried away by the constructive drive and an unusual and perhaps even more exciting destruction of the old. All the paternal modes of life with their tedium were falling by the wayside and instead there were plans of new villages with railway stations, bustling ports swarming with young drivers, mechanics, seamen, and engineers, macadam roads, colleges, theatres, like in Rostov...

"Instead of the song about a canary's plaintive ditties they sang new songs about eagles. They sing without drinking vodka. What's in vodka when you can, if only you wish to, make a sea, or do away with droughts or change climate. And that is not all! It is the first step that is difficult and once you fly to a certain height your wings grow stronger and you could try reaching a greater height."

Fomenko has a knack for creating complex characters, revealing their essence through their impulses, and dramatic situations when the discrepancy between appearance and reality is revealed. And that is why a character appears as an individual and a social type. Take, for example, Andrian Schepetkov. He is an abrasive and cantankerous old man but at bottom he is very kindly. The villagers respect him very much. Nastasia Schepetkova, the collective-farm manager, is also a character shown from many angles. She takes her son Tima to have a look at the pit for the future Tsimlyansky artificial lake:

" 'See that meadow, Tima? In 1920 Uncle Andrian fought for the Schepetovka unit's banner there. He tucked it under his overcoat and tackled four enemy soldiers. And he was wounded in his side. And his horse was wounded too.' "

" 'How do you know? ' Tima mumbled.

" 'Your father used to tell me when we mowed grass here. There was a commune here called The Red Horse and we helped it.' "

The character is fleshed out with history and appears as a folk hero. Although Andrian Schepetkov has a very volatile temper (the people in Korenevo have got used to his antics) he is basically an advanced and forward-looking man. His best qualities are manifested when the situation becomes difficult. When the Korenevo people had to abandon

fertile valleys and develop desert lands, Andrian Schepetkov, unlike Gerasim Zhivov, who left the collective farm, decided to return to it (while previously he worked in a sand quarry). He donates to the farm thousands of saplings which he had prepared in autumn for selling in the market and he heads a team which plants new vineyards. He is in the foreground of the drive to develop the wastelands.

To Valentin Golubov, who is in charge of the cattle farm, the resettlement of the village is a battle for a new life. His Cossack élan and dedication to the cause of world communism make him similar to Nagulnov in Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*. Golubov is a deeply feeling man with a keen sense of good and justice. Like Nagulnov, he suffers from slanderous ill-wishers and is inept in opposing them. He resorts to violence (tries to beat up Orlov and Ivakhnenko who have libelled him) for which he is expelled from the Communist Party. And yet he does not lose his belief in justice. A veteran soldier who was wounded seven times during the Great Patriotic War, he continues to be active and considers that no one could "make him removed from the Party".

Fomenko finds some poignant metaphors and parallels to invest his images with emotion and significance.

Take for example the character of Nastasia Schepetkova, an efficient collective-farm manager. When things began to happen in the collective farm and the question came up where and how people should move, Nastasia Schepetkova was at a loss and failed to provide leadership for the people. She is painfully aware of a rift between herself and her fellow-villagers and she feels their coolness. "People were embracing a new life and there she was like a worn cogwheel in a tractor which is running idle."

Nastasia's anxieties and her concern to restore rapport with the villagers are complicated by her love for Ilya Solod. He is a respectable and kindly man of advancing years who is somewhat timid with women. Nastasia is past forty but still hopes to marry. She remembers her husband Alexei who died in 1947 from the wounds he had sustained in the war; she loves her children—Timka and Raiska—who are eager to go to the construction project and no longer want to live under their mother's wing. Nastasia is capable of strong emotions and falls deeply in love with Solod, her lodger. She hopes to be happy with him. All this prompts

the author to compare Nastasia to a sprout scorched by the "Astrakhan" sandstorm. The metaphor will be seen to have many meanings if one remembers that the Volga-Don Canal was being built in order to put an end to droughts. Solod, a man with a heart of gold, loves Nastasia but is too shy to make the first step. The comparison of Nastasia with a drought-scorched sprout is woven into the structure of the novel to become a kind of lyrical miniature giving an idea of the depth of her feelings. She reminds us of the well-known metaphor in Sholokhov's *Quite Flows the Don* when Aksinya likens her destiny to a wilting lily-of-the-valley. Only Nastasia's life, unlike that of Aksinya, is not as tragic and hopeless in the context of the novel. But she is not aware of it. On the contrary, she is prey to sad thoughts:

"The winter crop along the road had wilted under the sandstorm, and there were only a few green plants left. Nastasia dismounted and following her habit of checking the crops plucked a plant and put it on her palm. The roots, the leaves, and in the middle a light barren husk of a grain which did not seem to belong to the plant at all. It was now drained, and that was how Nastasia Schepetkova felt. She was riding with the plant in her hand looking at it as if it were her mirror. She was weeping. She let herself wail and sob in a way she had never done since the death of Alexei. Tears streamed down her nose and chin and she did not bother to wipe them or hide her face. There was only the sky all around her. She wept because her love had come so late, because her children were grasping while she had never denied them anything; she wept because she was sorry for her children's father, Alexei, and she wept for love of her lodger and for the wasted years as farm manager which gave nothing to her kind woman's heart except work, work.

"The stud, sensing that she was in a bad way, did not pull and moved at a pace."

Some expressive similes, details, and parallels are used to show the budding love of Lyuba Fryanskova for the riotous and irrepressible Valentin Golubov. Complex reality finds a complex reflection in the characters and imagery.

Many chapters in Fomenko's novel are in harmony with historical and artistic truth. This is very evident in the chapters where two types of leaders are compared. One is District Party Secretary Golikov and the other Chairman of the District Executive Committee, Orlov. Soft-spoken and

gentle, Golikov is similar to Martynov in Ovechkin's *The Everyday Life of a District*. Orlov is strong-willed and adamant in upholding "what must be", which reminds us of Borzov from the same book. Fomenko should be credited with describing Golikov and Orlov by showing us how the people respond to them and by revealing the results of the two different styles of leadership. The writer's approach is anything but simplistic. He shows that Orlov has some support not only among his superiors (Zarnoi) but also among his subordinates (Darya Chernenkova, Party secretary in Korenevo, who believes that masses cannot be led without issuing orders). Orlov is a far cry from Valgan who resorted to demagoguery in order to thwart the initiatives of the people. But the general line of his behaviour ("Don't argue, do as you are told") and its consequences show that Orlov is an opponent of democratic principles. The issue is brought to a head at the Party conference where Orlov criticises Golikov and accuses him of straying away from the Party line. The writer uses similes which flash out the essence of Orlov: "Orlov was standing under the portrait of Lenin. He was saying that the district Party committee was not responding to a great nation-wide project. He admits that the Party committee means well but there is no getting away from the fact." The writer does not quote the exact words of Orlov, nor does he report them to us. But the context and the portrait of Lenin above Orlov's head as he accuses Golikov of deviating from the Party line tells us much more than commentary or direct exposure of Orlov. The polarity of the two characters stands out in high relief.

The people are on the side of Golikov although, unlike Orlov, he does not advertise his "democratic attitudes". Andrian Schepetkov recognises Golikov as "one of us", and regards him with respect. In his own Cossack way he admires Golikov's intelligence.

The people dislike Orlov. They disapprove of his activities and find an apt comparison to describe him. Konkin compares Orlov with pastor's lettuce, the bitterest enemy of wheat which grows on ploughed land.

Golikov is Orlov's superior in every way. He is not only better educated, more far-sighted and intelligent than Orlov. He has the support of the people.

Thus the typical circumstances drawn with concrete historical detail, correspond aesthetically to the depiction of

the characters in Fomenko's novel. The novel embodies historical truth. It shows that the general trend in the 1940s, despite all the shortcomings and contradictions, favoured the growth and promotion of such leaders as Golikov.

General Adomyan, head of the Volga-Don Canal construction, is an endearing character. He has ready sympathy for people's demands. The first secretary of the regional Party committee is drawn in keeping with the best traditions of Soviet literature. The first secretary, who appears in a brief episode and is unnamed, scrupulously adheres to his main principle which is to heed the voice of the masses. There is a sympathetic portrait also of the district Security Chief Filonov who supports Golikov in everything. All of them embody the positive aspects of life. These aspects are seen as the prevailing trend which has historical truth and morality on its side.

Golikov embodies the most advanced attitudes of his time.

In the second part of the novel the author is occasionally too rational in depicting the clash between Golikov and Orlov, and the description of the characters is not as throbbing with emotion as in the first part. Even so, on balance, the character of Golikov is a credit to the author's skill. In the second part of the novel the writer is intent to show the growth of this hero and describes his abilities as leader and educator of the masses. Golikov becomes the ideological and aesthetic focus of the novel which concentrates the new processes in the life of the collective farms in the Don area. Along with a gallery of other positive characters, Golikov has about him the romanticism of struggle and creative endeavour. There is an upbeat mood in the description of Golikov's reaction to the view of the Tsimlyansky artificial lake. Historical associations are naturally woven into his thoughts. And this lends the novel, which is full of historical references, a historical dimension:

"Yes, everything was on the boil... The motor boat was passing over the foundations of the village of Potemkinskaya—the former Zimoveiskaya, which now lay deep under water. Sergei knew that this was the birthplace of Emelyan Pugachev and that after Pugachev had been seized and beheaded, Empress Catherine the Great ordered to forget the word Zimoveiskaya and replace it by Potemkinskaya

after her favourite, Potemkin. And she also ordered that Pugachev's kin numerous among the villagers of Zimoveiskaya should be renamed Sychevs. Now a telegraph pole was floating over Zimoveiskaya-Potemkinskaya and there were slicks of oil on the surface... Buried under the waves were the old wine cellars which, as legend has it, were visited by Peter the Great. And the knolls which bore witness to Peter's attempts to join the Don and Volga rivers had long been washed by rains and overgrown with grass."

Golikov thinks about a happy future with the enthusiasm of a young communist who believes that socialism's potential is inexhaustible. He is exhilarated by the fresh wind and the sight of the immense surface of the water: "The sea which surrounded him on all sides took his breath away. Wild ducks scattered away from the boat, bobbed on the waves, and each wave was sparkling in the sun, generously reflecting the sun because the whole air was drenched in light. It was a joyful sight and he felt that he agreed with the experts who said that the presence of a large water surface doubles the solar radiation and could create a subtropical climate in which lemon and fig trees would grow."

The colourful sweeping sun-drenched landscape reflects Golikov's mood. The imagery, sentence structure are forceful and expressive of the hero's deep thoughts and feelings:

"The wind, taut as a rope, was ploughing up the bright billows and the bow waves, which charged the air with ozone and with the bracing freshness of the sea. Lenin must have envisioned something like this when he wrote about the Don plains which were monotonous, barren, dusty, and sunscorched... The rapid current raised waves at the banks and bent the submerged bushes to make them look like fishing rods with huge struggling fish on them. The tide was submerging the place, changing it before his eyes..."

Happy is he who is able to see the results of his efforts and who knows that a new life is beginning. It will be a life with its passions and its difficulties, but it will be a *new* life.

This perspective and ideas account for the special features of the novel and make its images, thoughts, and high moral atmosphere consonant with our heroic times.

* * *

We see that Soviet art is exploring new themes and new solutions of topical problems. A deepening historical approach and depiction of new contradictions bring new discoveries and new significant works. Soviet writers pinpoint the factors which set the pace of our life. Soviet art looks closely at the inner world of the new man and tries to do justice to his intellectual and moral perfection. In the process they discover new artistic values.

POETIC ELAN (The lyrical element in contemporary prose)

I

One of the major trends in contemporary prose is lyrical prose.

It must be said that the lyrical element is increasingly present in all Soviet writings of every genre, lending them new features. This is due to many factors but above all it is prompted by the author's desire not to be a cool onlooker of events but to identify himself with the feelings and thoughts of the characters, to find new forms of typification to detect the main and characteristic features of Soviet life and to influence the reader more immediately.

An important reason behind the growing lyricism of modern prose is the closer attention of the Soviet writers to the inner world of the characters, the complex and diverse manifestations of the spiritual richness of the Soviet man, who is actively involved in the building of a new communist society. Soviet art is increasingly preoccupied with moral problems. Lyrical form of narrative permits, along with the use of epic means, to probe into the finest shades of feeling, penetrate the emotional sphere of life, to raise and offer solutions to moral problems which loom so large in the life of our contemporary. All this is to be found in the stories of Chinghiz Aitmatov, in which the artist's ethos is openly manifested through lyrical digressions and long monologues of the characters which are vehicles for the author's personal feelings. The artist's reflections and feelings are merged with those of his characters to produce an emotional blend, to create a morally uplifting atmosphere, to poeticise the good qualities of the Soviet man (*Jamila*) which triumph over evil, hangovers of the past, and everything the author considers to be hostile to humanity and the people (one thinks of the struggle against fascism in *Mother Earth*).

Another catalyst of lyrical approach in modern prose has been the desire of the authors to give a philosophical interpretation of the key historical events. The Soviet man's horizons have broadened to encompass everything that happens in the world as well as events which have a direct bearing on his personal life. Writers are anxious to meet the demands of the reader. That accounts for the increasingly analytical portrayal of characters in modern literature in which attention is focused not on the results but on the very *process* of thinking, its complex dialectic and passionate search for a meaning of actions.

It is exceedingly difficult to embrace all the diversity of events in the present-day world and to record it in the objective form of epic canvases of sweeping historical dimensions. So authors turn to lyrical reflections and try to interpret events of epochal significance by telling about their own life or those of the people they know well.

All kinds of art contain a lyrical element which is a special form of describing the emotional side of life and in which the author's self and his moods are expressly present. It is not for nothing that Sergei Eisenstein, citing Plekhanov and following him, considered art to be sensuous thought.¹ Because the role of consciousness and of the subjective factor is increasingly important in the life of Soviet society, the role of the artist and his committed attitude to the outcome of the battles and events in the world also increases.

*I've lived, I've been, and I am answerable
For everything in this wide world.*

This was how Alexander Tvardovsky expressed the stand to which all Soviet artists will subscribe. Let us recall the passionate and lyrical works written during the Great Patriotic War: *Letters to My Comrade* by Boris Gorbатов, *The People Is Immortal* by Vassili Grossman, *The Science of Hatred* by Mikhail Sholokhov, *The Sailor's Soul* by Leonid Sobolev, *Volokolamsk Highway* by Alexander Bek, *Letters from the Front* by Valentin Ovechkin, to name a few. And today, too, the lyrical element is to be found in epics,

¹ See S. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, in six volumes, Vol. 2, Moscow, Iskusstvo Publishers, 1964, p. 109 (in Russian).

drama, and films. Only it is manifested differently in different arts and genres.

In epic genres proper (for example, the novel) the lyrical element usually accompanies the narrative and is most pronounced in lyrical digressions (these digressions may take different forms and perform different ideological and artistic functions depending on the general task of the artist).

In documentary genres the lyrical element is combined with factual accuracy and enables the author to directly express his views, feelings, and thoughts with regard to a particular phenomenon or event, or questions and problems for whose solution he calls. In these genres the lyrical element is at once general and concrete but it is not as personified as it is in the story or the novel. Unlike a story or a novel, a publicistic work is addressed to a definite audience.

When lyrical methods are used to describe the states of soul with the author actively involved and his "self" personified and being a form of depicting typical features of life then the whole narrative becomes highly emotional and vibrant. This may transform genres and lend all the main qualities of the lyrical genre to epic works (for example, the long short story).

The lyrical genre in prose has its specific technique. The main device is the presence of the author who reveals his experiences and thoughts consonant with the feelings and thoughts of his time. Such works are narrated in the first person, as in *Daytime Stars* by Olga Bergholtz, *The Icebook* by Juhan Smuul or *Flying Swans* by Mikhail Stelmakh. But the author's "self" can be manifested in different ways. It need not necessarily take the shape of first person narrative. The author may not be present in a story and there need not necessarily be lyrical digressions. The narrative can take the shape of an inspired story of heroic deeds, the heroes' thoughts and feelings which the author admires and tries to convey to the reader (*The Alpine Ballad* by Vasil Bykov). Some works combine in an original way all forms of depiction—first person narrative, epic narrative, and lyrical digressions, as in Oles Honchar's *The Tronka*. Throughout the narrative, however, the general elevated poetic tone prevails. And it is this that determines the peculiarities of the style and genre of Oles

Honchar's novel. It is innovatory because it combines an epic and a lyrical element in an unusual way (before Honchar's *The Tronka* such a combination was found in Boris Gorbатов's novel *Donbas*, which, however, was unfinished so that its genre was not manifested clearly enough).

There are some critics who would say that the lyrical genre in a long short story constrains the artist. The narrative, they maintain, is confined to the author's personal impressions, the autobiographical hero comes to the fore while all the other events and characters are subordinate. Others, however, think that the lyrical genre is the most analytical and the most capable of embracing all and sundry. Accordingly, they believe it should be the main trend in the development of contemporary literature.

Firstly, one must remember that, as Voltaire said, "all genres are good save the tiresome kind". One cannot hold up one particular style and underestimate the opportunities offered by other styles and other forms of artistic generalisation. I am for diversity of style. And the aesthetic principles of Mayakovsky, who wanted to see "more poets, good and diverse", are very relevant to our time.

Secondly, the expressiveness of the lyrical form depends on many factors, including the artist's talent, the particular aspects of reality which he poeticises, and the degree to which ideals, perceptions, and feelings correspond to the ideals of the time (in other words, his world view). The history of the arts shows that when the artist's "self" is at one with the interests of the people and encompasses the wealth of the people's thoughts and feelings, the lyrical form offers great scope for generalisation. The narrative then transcends the limits of the "self" and the lyrical works become vehicles for expressing the noble soul of the Soviet man.

Thirdly, the lyrical genre should not be opposed to other genres. Borderlines between genres are never clear-cut (we define them in terms of their dominant features). Besides, lyrical genres enable the author to combine the most diverse methods of typification. Lyrical forms are easily combined, for example, with romantic forms (as will presently be seen from the analysis of Vasil Bykov's *The Alpine Ballad*). They fit in well in documentary genres (travel notes), the autobiographical story and epic narrative forms. That is particularly apparent when the author tries to interpret the key

phenomena of his time in terms of the people's experience, i. e., when the author assumes a progressive position. His personal emotions reflect objective processes and, while not preventing him from depicting life's processes (as happens with those who take an incorrect stand and are preoccupied with their narrow, sometimes morbid experiences), help him to do that by representing his experience and that of the nation as one and thus giving it a new lease of life in art. The author in such cases freely uses various forms of typification and combines them in new ways. Incidentally, synthesis of the most diverse methods of typification—while the lyrical tone and emotionalism of the narrative is preserved—is characteristic of much recent writing.

I believe that it would be wrong to say that *The Icebook* is just a book of travel impressions. It is a kind of lyrical story combining various methods of typification. Juhan Smuul's book breaks new ground ideologically and aesthetically. It combines features of the documentary genre—the notes of the travel with a Soviet expedition to the Antarctic—with lyrical reflections and some epic methods in describing characters. The narrative is held together by the author's lyrical reflections which reveal his inner world and broad horizons. There emerges from the pages of the book the figure of our contemporary, generalised and concrete at the same time. The hero's free-ranging thoughts about the Soviet people, their heroic deeds, the past and future of our country, recurring contrasts between life in Soviet Estonia and the capitalist countries—all these make us understand that the narrator in *The Icebook* is a new type of man. A focus is created where all the narrative threads join. A synthesis of different narrative methods used in *The Icebook* gives a generalised significance to concrete facts. The exploit of Soviet Arctic explorers and their heroic work is seen against a historical background. The confidential story of an eyewitness takes the form of a legend similar to legends in the ancient chronicle *Povest Vremennikh Let* (The Tale of Bygone Years).

One finds a synthesis of various methods in *Daytime Stars* by Olga Bergholtz. A solid documentary basis for the book is provided by the autobiographical story about the life and the feat of the people of Leningrad. The author draws freely on her diaries entitled *This Is Leningrad Calling* written during the Great Patriotic War. Epic methods of

description are used in episodes from the history of the 1917 Revolution and the Civil War, the stories about Krzhizhanovsky and Lenin, and stories about the construction of the Volkhov power dam. And in the description of the characters—Father, Aunt Dunya, nurse Varvara—Olga Bergholtz resorts to methods commonly used in epic genres (broad generalisations and individuality of character). However, the lyrical element prevails in *Daytime Stars*, making it possible to pass freely from one episode to another, linking pictures of different times by lyrical reflections about time and about herself.

The author of *Daytime Stars* is above all concerned to interpret her time in a lyrical form and express her views on the generation of Soviet people who were young in 1930s. Moreover, the author tries to trace the moulding of that generation's mentality and point to the main features which enabled it to identify itself with the nation's destiny and, in time of historical trials, display ideological and moral fortitude, stand their ground and endure the siege of Leningrad, the hunger and cold, overcome death and win an unheard-of victory.

The lyrical stories of Vladimir Soloukhin called *Vladimir Byways* and *Dew Drop* also show concrete facts from many angles. It is not just a nostalgic trip to the land of the author's childhood and an evocation of the perceptions of a child. It is also the story of the changes which have occurred in the countryside of the Vladimir area during the Soviet years and especially in recent years thanks to the Party's concern for the well-being of the people. A poetic look at the past is matched by a poetic view of the present and projection of the future. All this permits the author to combine diverse methods (flashbacks, an essay about the present time, and lyrical reflections about the future).

Rasul Gamzatov's *My Daghestan* offers a diversity of narrative methods. The author speaks about himself, about his impressions and his work as a poet, draws vivid portraits of Suleiman Stalsky, Effendi Kapiev, Abutalib Gafurov, and his father Gamzat Tsadasa, throwing in numerous legends, Oriental parables, witty tales, didactic inscriptions, and excerpts from diaries and poems. The form of the story is very loose. It is a confession of a poet. But all the diverse methods, the didactic stories, legends, accounts of real events and persons conspire to give us a picture of the folk

wisdom and age-old experience of a small but talented freedom-loving people, its lofty notions of man's mission on earth and the irreconcilable struggle between good and evil.

We follow the poet's thought from his village to the Kremlin, from the narrow gorges of Daryal to the first spaceflight, from the needs of a humble shepherd to the destinies of peace on earth. And we are moved by all this and experience his feelings as our own. We are made party to the story of a major poet's soul which encompasses the rich world of the Soviet man. National legends shrouded in the aura of romance, poems, inscriptions, stories about his countrymen, the author's inspired thoughts about the mission of the poet (to praise the beauty of man's soul which opposes evil forces, to love one's language and one's people, to keep one's link with them, and to tell the truth)—all this merges into a stream of important feelings and thoughts, and makes the book expressive and colourful. Rasul Gamzatov gives us an example of how the life of a small nation uplifted by the Great October Revolution acquires universal significance.

We can see that even in lyrical genres lyrical forms do not exist by themselves and are always combined with other means and methods. That gives authors great room for manoeuvre and enables them to use various artistic means while following the main principle and pursuing the main task. In each case the lyricism is manifested in a different way making an imprint on the whole style of the book. So in considering lyricism and its forms a concrete approach is necessary in order to identify the artistic features of a work and the particular role of the lyrical element in it.

II

Juhan Smuul's story "Sea of Japan, December", although perhaps not the writer's highest achievement, is nevertheless interesting. It passed largely unnoticed by critics and readers. And yet it raises one of the overriding themes of our time, namely, man and technology, man and nature, the conquest of outer space and the study of the laws of the atmosphere.

The writer has become deeply aware of the importance of

that problem and even went on an expedition aboard the scientific vessel *Voyeikov* to look at first hand at the work of scientists. He set down his impressions in a sincere and vivid form recording his moods at the time of action. We get a moving picture of the life and work of the expedition, and portraits of various types of scientists and workers on the expedition; the writer conveys the great scope of research, the atmosphere of the research vessel, the bold plans of the scientists, their fascinating and original hypotheses, dreams, and dedication to the task of cracking the mysteries of the atmosphere and controlling nature.

Communication with talented scientists, the documentary basis of the story, and the writer's unprejudiced view—all make it an authentic description of the expedition and a competent treatment of complex scientific questions, notably man's role in discovering the laws of nature.

In "Sea of Japan, December" Juhan Smuul draws vivid portraits of scientists, who feel themselves to be part of the Soviet people and who are exploring the atmosphere not to glorify and distinguish themselves as an elite but in order to benefit other people. Juhan Smuul himself feels part of the scientific family of the *Voyeikov*. Juhan Smuul uses some new methods in order to tackle the complex tasks which have faced him in this book.

He dispenses with the diary form, and with painstaking recording of detail. He does not give us a straightforward account of the ship's route and does not describe events in chronological order. He even refers with some irony to his former predilection for documentary and accurate accounts, complete with coordinates and time: "I am not going to tell you the coordinates. My wife, whom I sometimes exploit as a typist and proofreader, removed most of them from my previous book of travel (*The Icebook*.—V.N.). And it was after much persuading that I managed to salvage some of the more important ones. But each time she sulked she called me an old coordinate.

"God forbid to live through such an experience again! "¹

In his new book Juhan Smuul uses fictitious names and does not give a factual account of their relations, in short, he rejects methods used in the genre called a "sketch with

¹ J. Smuul, *Sea of Japan, December*, Moscow, Sovetsky Pisatel Publishers, 1964. This is the edition quoted elsewhere in this book.

an address". He abandons diary notes in favour of the story genre with a clear-cut plot, fictitious characters, a somewhat more general view of facts which enable him to portray with greater freedom and integrity the more characteristic features, not only of the *Voyeikov* and not only of a particular expedition, but of many expeditions, scientific search and discoveries.

Juhan Smuul admits that diary notes are a difficult genre. They are a challenge to the writer making free handling of facts and generalisations difficult.

"I think every writer has experienced at least once in his life a feeling that he is sitting at his writing desk in handcuffs. His fantasy is paralysed, his inspiration wilts and stumbles like a blind workhorse. We feel hemmed in by the stark concreteness of the material, the essential and, to an even greater degree, inessential details and we can't stop being recorders of life and become its creative interpreters. The inessential obscures the essential, the unimportant the important, *truths of the day* burden us and pin us to the ground. The books are stillborn... So I decided to uncuff my hands and look at the *Voyeikov* from the tops of its masts."

Juhan Smuul's story "Sea of Japan, December" unfolds the plot in a new way and structures it in a new way. What propels the story is not a simple step-by-step description of the expedition, as in *The Icebook*, but an underlying idea, the author's desire to reveal the main traits of the characters and the atmosphere that reigned in the *Voyeikov* crew as it fulfilled an important assignment. He is concerned to reveal what motivates Soviet people in their heroic behaviour.

The characters are carefully selected and they are arranged in a well-thought-out pattern, as in a novel or a play, all of which makes it possible to describe the crew most fully and to give an idea of a contemporary scientist and discoverer. The events in the story are related not for their own sake, as in *The Icebook*, but in order to reveal the characters of people. That is why the author, while tracing the main thread of events—the *Voyeikov* expedition, preparation and launching of weather rockets, the study of the sea bed, etc.,—peoples his story with very diverse and mutually complementary characters, introducing some who did not take part in the actual expedition.

The author uses different forms of combining the lyrical

"self" and the epic and objective portrayal of characters. He tells us about his own experiences—the boredom of the sea ("Big Hal"), reflections on man's eternal struggle with bad weather (a whole treatise on meteorology and its tasks, the man's drive to master the laws of the atmospheric movement). And he looks back at his past meetings with different people. These stories are usually full of warm humour and take an ironic look at life's hardships and little joys. The artist constantly uses particular facts as a take-off point for general reflections only to return to the particular and the concrete (which, however, is always characteristic). This happens almost in every page and the author proclaims it to be the main way of bringing together the lyrical and epic modes of description, and this (along with humour and irony) gives the story a charm all of its own.

Here, for example, the author begins to give us his personal impressions upon boarding the *Voyeikov*. He is surrounded by strangers and he has discovered many omissions in his preparations for the expedition. Prey to conflicting emotions, he blunders and acts as if he were blindfolded. He feels what is called sea boredom. The author gives an imaginative, and I should say a nationally flavoured turn to that theme. He takes up an Estonian folk myth about Big Hal who visits people away from their families, their native village and their community. Those who succumb to Big Hal are doomed to perish. In a lyrical digression the artist opposes Soviet ideology to Big Hal: "We are all linked with the world by our work, our dreams, our assignment, our country, our ideology, and background—and all of them combine to make things hard for Big Hal." We see that individualism, which is so characteristic of capitalist society, contributes to a feeling of ennui and loneliness and makes man more vulnerable to Big Hal. By contrast collectivism, team spirit, and mutual understanding, which are features of socialist society and ideology, are a sure antidote to Big Hal. After vividly describing sea boredom the author makes a general conclusion: "A collective is only what it is if we remember the main moral obligation: and that is to treat your fellows' troubles as something serious and considerable and keep your own troubles to yourself." And the chapter is crowned with a lyrical conclusion:

"Big Hal is wandering about the ship. Let him wander.

"Give me your harp, Väinämöinen. I mean business."

The principle of proceeding from the particular to the general is used also in describing the characters, i.e., in the epic method of generalisation. One must note the depth and the dialectical subtlety of the writer's thought. He does not limit himself to a particular phenomenon and tries to take a broader look at reality.

Juhan Smuul is equally opposed to the two extremes which were observed in the work of some writers of the time. Some of them underlined the "weaknesses" and duality that allegedly alone could make characters living people while others drew heroes who have no use for doubts or reflections.

Juhan Smuul shows strong people, characters of integrity who are able to "push the frontiers of the unknown", to commit their will and intelligence to a single purpose, to be the Mozarts of science. They are flesh-and-blood people with their individual traits and life stories, they have individual likes and dislikes, but they all share a bold and creative attitude. Juhan Smuul tries to show their dedication from many angles and at the same time as a phenomenon characteristic of our socialist society which moulds the new type of individual.

This is true of Pavel Petrovich, a specialist in telemetry and radiocommunication. He used to be a factory worker, then became a freshwater captain, and an airman during the war. He took part in the fierce battles on the Kursk Salient, at the Central Front, and in the defeat of the Kwantung Army in the Far East. But whatever job Pavel Petrovich had to do he invariably committed all his passion to it.

At first glance Pavel Petrovich looks inert and slow. But he is transformed at work. The author compares this transformation with the poet's gift of creative work and thinks it is the main feature of a Soviet scientist. A biographical flashback in the story thus becomes artistically significant, and a particular fact suggests generalisations. In place of a dry account of facts there is a lyrical and passionate narrative.

"I entered my friend's laboratory and I did not recognise him. Surrounded by instruments, gauges, blinking lamps, flickering screens and his young subordinates, a different Pavel Petrovich was sitting on a swivel chair. He was stooped as usual, but he looked younger, full of zest and gusto. In his eyes flickered the same eager expectation as on the

screens which were crossed by throbbing signals—the images of intensive thought, its companions. My friend felt at home here, and he was pursuing the ideas which had probably occurred to him while lying on his cot and staring at the ceiling.

“ ‘Something is coming through,’ said Pavel Petrovich. This could be said by a poet who at last hits on the right track and feels that a poem is about to pour forth. I am happy to have seen a different and true face of Pavel Petrovich, and that merry restlessness in the eyes which makes the Soviet people what they are.’

“His face is the face of his country,” the author concludes.

Juhan Smuul's book is lyrical precisely because it reveals the inner wealth and poetic quality of the new man. The author met and became friends with one such man on board the *Voyeikov*. He came to love the new breed of people, the heroes who were working to make the world more beautiful.

The designer Rem Vasilievich looks every inch an outstanding personality: “Everything in Rem Vasilievich calls for a brush and a canvas. If he wore a large beret he would have strongly resembled a descendant of a Flemish nobleman.” Rem Vasilievich has the passion of a genuine scientist. He is completely engrossed in solving a new task, in “extending the frontiers of knowledge”. But he is not just a brain living in the world of figures and calculations. No. He is a man with broad views and interests and he has original ideas about the world, duty, and beauty. One evening, when a rocket soared into the dark sky roaring and spewing out flame he said: “ ‘What a beauty! Pushkin! It's very beautiful today.’ ” It is not by chance that the name of the poet Pushkin cropped up. Pushkin's work, full of the dynamism of thought and feeling, is remarkably harmonious and whole. It is magnificent in its perfection. And everything the scientists on board the ship are doing in order to chart mankind's road to the future is a tribute to the magnificence of spirit. Juhan Smuul seeks to reveal the dedication of the scientist which shows not in self-analysis and reflection but in real things.

His characters inveigh passionately against some writers who idealise reflexive and vacillating people and oppose them to characters all of a piece as the leading type of our

time. Ivan Ivanovich Koryagin speaks with a bluntness of a man with an important job to do about writers who fill their works with utterly degraded characters or characters who are on the way to being spoilt. "Their books are all gummy with teddyboys. If there were only teddyboys around we would have no *Voyeikov*, no rockets. We would have nothing. It would have been one big mess."

The author clearly wants to poeticise strong characters. And this is very apparent in the chapter called "People, Earth, and Oceans", in which the launching of a rocket is described. It is a fast-moving story in which characters have to act in situations taxing their intellectual potential. The story of the preparation of the rocket for the launching is punctuated with flashbacks to episodes in the life of the hero, Ivan Ivanovich Koryagin, and projections to the future. The countdown for the launching sets the dynamic pace of the story. Koryagin's voice announces through the mouthpiece: "40 minutes, 30 minutes, 20 minutes." And this organises disparate material and subordinates it to the relentless march of time. The scenes from the past life of Ivan Ivanovich, an account of his work, descriptions of his friends, and of the crew of the scientific expedition—all this creates a background, recaptures the historic situation and permits to link a concrete fact (the launching of a rocket) with typical circumstances which have produced and moulded people like Koryagin, the paratrooper Polosukhin (Koryagin's teacher), the people who designed and built rockets, and the seamen with whom Koryagin is brought together on an important assignment.

The description of Ivan Ivanovich Koryagin and the other characters is instilled with great emotion. The author identifies himself with the character and follows him closely as he attends to urgent and complex tasks. Bold metaphoric associations also contribute to the emotional intensity of the narrative.

Smuul's style is metaphoric, full of similes and parallels, humour and irony, and friendly bantering addressed to himself and the characters. The similes and parallels are by no means arbitrary. They draw on the writer's great life experience and intimate knowledge of the objects being depicted. They use the author's hard-won knowledge of life which was full of narrow escapes and clashes. He is one of those who shares the life of his characters. Often to under-

score his point he turns to folklore and admires the ability of the Estonian fishermen to describe a person in one apt word, quotes colourful passages from folklore, turns to famous classical images, and gives testimony of great scientists and explorers. All this is geared to a certain idea and artistic purpose. Some of the chapters in the story are lyrical novellas elaborating an idea through metaphoric images, similes and parallels.

An example in point is a chapter called "Eureka!" In fact, the word expressing the joy of a discoverer ("I have found it!") expresses the main idea of the story. The author views the *Voyeikov* research team as a group of pioneers. They all share the spirit of inquiry, creativity, and search, of "extending the frontiers of the unknown". The classic expression in Juhan Smuul's story is filled out with artistic content. The author turns to the past, recalls interesting events and relates them to history. He says that the exclamation "Eureka!"—sometimes jubilant and sometimes sinister—has milestone the history of progress, marking the highlights of science, the birth of great artistic ideas, the budding of love ("I have found my destiny!") and early disappointments ("I have discovered that she is not what I thought her to be..."). The author shows how the joy of pioneers was beclouded by the jungle laws of gain and exploitation, how scientific discoveries in capitalist world were used for evil aims and served the purpose of genocide. "The airman on board the American bomber who flew over Hiroshima and pressed the button to destroy a city of a hundred thousand people, later came to consider himself to be guilty of mass killing. This very human reaction was enough grounds for the American Air Force to put him in a lunatic asylum." And in contrast with this, the author stresses and proves that in the Soviet Union research serves humane purposes: "We human children on the earth of men cherish the word 'Eureka!' which accompanies a discovery; it may be great or small but in any case is a *happy* discovery. Great or small but always useful, a discovery that could serve and help man."

The word "Eureka!" is invested with a lyrical message because the author makes it the catchword which propels the story, and helps him to find out what makes the Soviet man tick: "During that voyage I felt like shouting 'Eureka!'

on dozens of occasions." In fact, the whole narrative in Juhan Smuul's book is a series of discoveries of new traits in the people surrounding him.

The chapter "Characters and Rockets (Continued)" makes a pointed use of metaphoric associations with the help of which the author expresses his thoughts and describes his characters. He quotes from a poem called "I loved" by the poetess Elvi Sinervo. This poem is a kind of an artist's confession of love for the working people:

*I loved common people whose hands
Were wrung in passion or cast nets,
People who knew how bread was made,
And how plants grew, and how much sweat it takes.*

The poem expresses admiration for men of science who can further the advance of mankind:

*I loved those who read a lot and knew a lot:
Knew how volcanoes were born and how kings died,
Knew about the life of the beasts and the make-up of acids
And the laws of evolution.*

There was a humanity and purpose about her love for people. She wanted all people, even those who found themselves among the dregs of life in a capitalist city, to reform, to be happy and to be worthy of the lofty word, "mankind". The poetess declared her faith in man and said she wanted to "glorify him always and everywhere" as distinct from those who liked to abuse man. That declaration reminds one of Gorky and places Elvi Sinervo in the ranks of active humanists. Her love for people had nothing in common with all-forgiving charity. Her humanism was against those who tried to destroy man's humanity and were concerned only with gain. The poetess compares the un-human essence of such people with an opaque bottle containing poison:

*Only one kind I dislike—
Those who, having saved a little,
Were afraid to lose it and dreamt
Of increasing it:*

*They are no better than opaque bottles
From which you can pour nothing and
To which you can add nothing.*

Juhan Smuul identifies his aesthetic credo with that poem of Elvi Sinervo. He borrows its structure of imagery, similes and ideas and applies them to the people he describes. Thus he often compares negative types with "opaque bottles" and uses her idea about "real people" to describe positive characters. After quoting the poem Juhan Smuul goes on to give a portrait of Ivan Ivanovich Koryagin. I crave the reader's indulgence for quoting it in full because it shows the free-ranging associations so characteristic of the author's style:

"My old friend Ivan Ivanovich used to study a lot. He knew something about the birth of volcanoes. He knew nothing about the way kings die, though. The laws of evolution and the chemical composition of acids—those were things he knew. His hands were familiar with hardship and work. I think that having lived all his life in a city he has a dim notion about plants (although he can tell a coniferous tree from a leaf-bearing one), and is rather vague about the way bread is made. But he has sailed all over the world, steered planes, and taught others to do it, is familiar with the silence that reigns in the gondolas of air balloons and knows what the earth looks like from a great altitude. He likes intelligent machines and he likes their creators even more. He authored many scientific articles and a book on the elements of air navigation. He was an in man in air dynamics. He was an expert car driver and could steer a boat in side waves as well as an old fisherman. He probably knew better and had better understanding of what was going on in various strata of the atmosphere than anyone else on board the *Voyeikov*. He could decipher the signals sent back by rockets and was a top-notch fitter. He was too much of a piece and too robust to understand those whose souls are in fragments. From time to time he would speak about literature from a very puritan point of view and he did not bother to consider the differences between the laws of mechanics and the laws of art... But the most precious thing was that he knew his place on earth and his place among people, he did not vaunt the burden of his responsibility, nor did he try to shirk it. While he was the same as

everyone he moulded the attitudes of others without being aware of it."

The broad parallels and associations make Juhan Smuul's style poetic and his imagery polysemantic, creating the scope which is a hallmark of a genuine work of art.

There are metaphoric associations even when the story deals with scientific problems. The author scoffs at writers who go in for describing technology and enjoy using professional jargon and displaying their technical knowledge. In Juhan Smuul's book technology is present because it is the world in which live his heroes, who are exploring the mysteries of nature. The author admires scientific achievements and respects technology but these do not exist in his book for their own sake. They bring out human traits. Technology is invested with life. The signals of radio probes and rockets appear as voices of living creatures appealing to our audiomemory and triggering a chain of complex associations. They carry away the author like Ravel's Bolero. Juhan Smuul poeticises the world of electronics and tries to depict the peculiar mode of thinking characteristic of scientists. And he is not above self-irony. The associations designed to give us an idea about scientific thought (the comparison of rocket signals with Ravel's Bolero and with the sound of Chekhov's wistful call "Misioos, where are you?" alternate with deliberately earthly comparisons of rocket signals with squeaking of a duckling who has been lost in the reeds and calls for his mother. Yet all this combines to give us a vivid idea of the complex but very harmonious and conserted picture of work, a hymn to creative endeavour which the author heard on board the *Voyeikov*. At the end of the story about signals comes a lyrical digression very much in the spirit of Chekhov's novella "A House with an Attic":

"And what do you, my sceptical friend, hear in these signals which appear like a scattered flock of birds on the decoder?

"Don't tell me that you see nothing but figures, figures, figures... Of course there are figures. But above all you hear in them a song about man's work, his intelligence, and what seemed sad to me may appear joyful and exalted to you. We are both right, absolutely right."

In drawing the picture of the difficult work of the *Voyeikov* research team the author tries to give us poetic

glimpses of the world of technology in which his heroes live. This is a new idea about the scientific work and the power of human reason. Entire chapters in Juhan Smuul's story are set pieces, one might even say, poems in prose (lyrical digressions about rocket signals, about a moonlit night, the exploration of the deep sea, the launching of rockets, etc.). Smuul views technology as a more perfect entity than it is normally portrayed because, he argues, it is an "alter ego" of an intelligent hero. The author carries a polemical chip on his shoulder when he says that writers describing technology need not invent a special world. It is their business to keep abreast of what the new man is creating because "fantasy can hardly keep up with the rapid pace of technology", the burgeoning of science which conquers nature.

All the chapters in Juhan Smuul's story are related to each other in such a way as to give us an idea of the real facts (the people, their characters, technology and research) and at the same time to evoke the desired emotion. This end is served by landscapes which are always lyrical and emotionally charged. The landscape never exists for its own sake, being always geared to a certain artistic purpose and providing imagery to convey a certain idea (either the challenges of work on board the *Voyeikov*, or the moods of the author, the dreams of the hero, etc). Landscapes in such cases acquire an allegoric meaning. For example, the image of the "open sea", which the author creates in describing the Sea of Japan.

That image is suggested by observed reality: "On portside there stretches a lifeless shore which is sometimes covered by patches of fog, sometimes drenched with sun, sometimes hugged by low clouds or shrouded in the milky billows of snow storms. And to the right of us, as far as the eye reaches, the Sea of Japan sings its eternal brooding song, a truly open sea because far away beyond the horizon it merges with the Pacific." Then follows a lyrical digression in which the author, contrary to what one might expect, does not express his feelings on perceiving the sea. He tries to reveal the meaning of the seamen's term "open sea" and to give us an idea of the immensity of the Sea of Japan. He backs up a geographical definition with a train of associated images. He is remarkably sensitive to language and he poeticises man's ability to give apt names to natural phenom-

ena: "The open sea! Listen, my friend, to the sound of these words which have hardly ever been used in Estonian literature since Juri Parijõgi. These are not words but a symphony, a cantata for the organ and violin. You have only to close your eyes and see the words not just as a combination of letters but as something gigantic and defying your imagination by its diversity of colours, hues, and shades ranging from black to the colour of aluminium polished to a dazzling degree of smoothness. I can touch these words with my hand and feel them throbbing in my palm like the neck of a young wild horse looking at you with bloodshot eyes and trying to bite your shoulder."

Features of a real-life phenomenon are not just grouped or enumerated but are given an emotional charge and a new lease of life. A concept is invested with broad association and includes both the real content ("open sea") with its attributes (boundlessness) and the emotional view of it expressing the author's state of soul: "The sea can look tender and fuzzy. Or it can be prickly like a hedgehog. But it is the same sea, the open sea, open waters, an ocean which encompasses all seas and oceans and a lot of other things: the languor with which young boys look at the waves, the mysterious warmth of the dreams of our childhood, and the most difficult and eventful days of our maturity. The ocean has a beginning and an end, it has its boundaries formed by shores and meridians, the sea is limited and confined in its roar. But the open sea and open space takes in everything, it is above everything, like Allah. Only such notions as human reason and cosmos are comparable with the open sea. They alone have the same scope."

Metaphoric language makes Smuul's images polysemantic. Think, for example, of the image of the wing. It is prompted to the author by the scientific idea of the wing's strength. The author uses the load per square centimetre of a bird's wing as a semantic image to convey the idea of the creative potential of the people of different professions (writers of different calibre and engineers). Then the image is brought to a climax as the soaring thought of Ivan Ivanovich Koryagin is compared with the capacity of an airwing.

Passionate commitment, lyricism, and imagery are blended in order to underline the fact that Ivan Ivanovich has been brought up by his country and moulded

by its social set-up.

"His wings were strengthened by all his friends on land, at sea, and in the air. A man brought up by the Komsomol, a man to whom the Party has given so much and from whom it demands so much, cannot have weak wings. They must be the wings of a man in whom there lives the spirit of a Mozart."

People like Ivan Koryagin can conquer outer space, harness the forces of nature, uphold the gains of the October Revolution, and insure peace for the Soviet Union. This is the idea that emerges from the chain of associations in the book of Juhan Smuul, a gifted Estonian writer who has died so suddenly.

III

The lyrical element which gives a special tone to the narrative can manifest itself in different ways. For a more detailed look at the problem, let us take Vasil Bykov's *The Alpine Ballad*. It shows the strongest sides of that writer's talent and holds a promise of future success.

Bykov's story is based on real facts and it praises human courage, nobleness, and the qualities displayed by a Soviet soldier in an extreme situation. These account for the lyricism and characteristic inspiration of Bykov's style in *The Alpine Ballad*.

Before I dwell at some length on Bykov's *The Alpine Ballad* let me make a preliminary remark.

I consider Vasil Bykov to be a gifted writer who can dramatise moral problems and is adept at describing man's feeling and behaviour in battle and at tragic moments which were so numerous during the war. But his work is not devoid of contradictions. He is sometimes one-sided in his attempts to reveal the tragic sides of war and man's behaviour at war. He focuses attention on inner contradictions and "odd cases". These sometimes obscure his view of the underlying processes determining the Soviet man's behaviour in tragic conditions. His notion of good and evil is sometimes abstract and then his moral problems are devoid of a social background.

Vasil Bykov's special interest in the tragic sides of war is understandable. The war had inflicted incurable wounds

on Soviet people and the memory of it still troubles our hearts. But can one live just by pain and see war, especially the Great Patriotic War, only from a tragic angle? Of course, having himself passed through the ordeal of war, Vasil Bykov is more acutely aware than many of the suffering which it visited on Soviet people. His personal keen awareness is reflected in his writings. But the experience of history and the experience of a nation is always larger than the experience of an individual, no matter how talented. Beside, the very notion of the tragic in the Great Patriotic War, which was a war for the righteous cause, is intimately linked with the notion of heroism, with the strength of will and fortitude, and the humanity of the Soviet soldier's behaviour. In keeping with the truth of life, Vasil Bykov in many of his works reflected the link between the tragic and the heroic, and depicted the Soviet man as spiritually noble and rich (*The Third Rocket*, *The Alpine Ballad*). And in such works the motives of human behaviour are quite different. Instead of the abstract idea about the meaninglessness of suffering, the dependence of an individual life on the irrational power of the commander with a misguided sense of duty, what came to the foreground was the idea of conscious heroism, courage and self-sacrifice displayed in fighting the enemy. Even in *The Dead Feel No Pain*, whose main idea is open to some argument, the battle scenes are drawn with Bykov's characteristic skill and are powerful tribute to the courage of Soviet soldiers (battle against tanks).

Vasil Bykov's story *Sotnikov* (first published in *Novy Mir*, 1970, No. 5) evoked conflicting critical opinions. I for one consider it to be a positive phenomenon in the writer's career. It is marked by increased depth in revealing moral problems, by truthful portrayal of tragic situations in which Soviet people were caught up during the war (German occupation). The story receives its mood and significance from the moral strength which Sotnikov displays in face of death (he is contrasted to Rybak, a physically stronger man who at the decisive moment proves to be a coward and commits treachery to save his life). I think it is important, therefore, along with criticising the shortcomings, to point out the strong sides of the writer's work which hold out a promise of new successes for him. *The Alpine Ballad* is of particular importance in this connection.

As far as genre is concerned, that long short story of Vasil Bykov is a kind of poem in prose evoking unusual events and facts which have gone down in legend. As one could expect from a ballad, Vasil Bykov's story is dramatic and full of suspense. It shows strong people capable of sacrificing their lives for the great ideas of freedom, love and justice. Everything in the ballad is unusual—the landscapes, the feelings, and the cliff-hanging situations: Ivan Tereshka kills Kommandführer Sandler, his fellow inmates blow up a bomb and sacrifice their lives to help Ivan break out of a prison camp; in the Alps he meets a fearless Italian girl, Giulia, and falls in love with her; ambushed by fascists, he dies a hero's death to save Giulia's life.

Stylistically, *The Alpine Ballad* combines romantic and realistic methods. An austere realistic manner is used to describe the inhuman conditions in nazi captivity, work at the factory with the SS-man standing guard, and the story of Ivan Tereshka's life. He was an ordinary Byelorussian farmer who grew up in a poor family. His father had died early and he was early exposed to all the hardship of life. We read about Ivan's coming to the front, his being wounded and experiencing inrequited love for the nurse Anyuta.

And yet the general tone of the narrative is romantic rather than realistic. The author concentrates on showing unusual events, feelings and situations. That accounts for many features of Bykov's story. In marked contrast to his writings which take a one-sided view of the contradictory phenomena of life and play down the heroism of Soviet soldiers (*The Dead Feel No Pain*) *The Alpine Ballad* praises the noble features of the Soviet man, poeticises his heroism, the humane behaviour and feelings of an ordinary Soviet soldier in an extreme situation. The romantic tone of the narrative, based on a realistic perception of reality, thus acquires a new character. The writer is aware of the unusual nature of events in his ballad, and he poeticises them. That enables him, without losing touch with reality and preserving scrupulous realism in the description of circumstances, to reveal the lofty feelings and thoughts of his hero.

It is easy to see some similarities between Vasil Bykov's *The Alpine Ballad* and Mikhail Sholokhov's *The Fate of a Man*. The main resemblance is that both have powerful central characters. A simple farmer like Andrei Sokolov in Sholokhov's story, Ivan Tereshka finds himself in the

inferno of a Hitlerite concentration camp and reveals indomitable spirit in trying to break out of the nazi hell at any cost. Like Andrei Sokolov, he reveals his heroism when he comes face to face with the nazi atrocities: "In the regiment he did not distinguish himself from other infantry men. He had collected three citations from the command and two medals For Valour for his performance in battles and he did not believe that he was capable of much more than that. And it was only here in the prison camp where there was no one to inspire him to heroic deeds or to give him awards, where the slightest disobedience could cost one his life—only here his irrepressible spirit, audacity and doggedness manifested themselves. He saw the ugly face of nazism here and it was brought home to him that death was not the worst thing that could happen in war."

Confronted with heavy odds, Ivan Tereshka grows from an ordinary soldier into a larger-than-life hero.

The similarities between *The Alpine Ballad* and *The Fate of a Man* are due primarily to the similar material which they take up. It is important, however, to note the similarities in the main principles of the realistic depiction of life used by both authors. We see that the book of the younger writer, admittedly a highly original one, follows in the mainstream of the realistic tradition, contributing new colours to it.

In depicting a dramatic situation (Ivan Tereshka's escape from nazi captivity) Vasil Bykov concentrates on the innermost feelings which are dramatised by the extreme situation when, it would seem, the instinct of self-preservation and egoism should have prevailed. And there Vasil Bykov uses romantic methods saturating the realistic texture of his work with intense lyricism and showing his hero in a poetic light. The lyricism which results is of a special kind. It is most vividly manifested in the hero's inner monologues.

The inner monologues in *The Alpine Ballad* usually occur at the most dramatic points in the narrative and are in harmony with other artistic devices. These monologues take various forms and discharge various artistic functions. Sometimes they merge into direct speech, become part of the author's narrative, or description of the landscape. Their main function is to reveal deep emotions, their interplay

and evolution. Caught up in an extreme situation, Ivan Tereshka is trying to understand life and reacts keenly to everything that happens. Active perception of life is in general characteristic of heroes in Soviet literature and especially so of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. With the help of inner monologue the writer penetrates into the innermost recesses of the hero's thoughts and feelings and shows his shifting moods. Appearing at the tensest moments in the narrative, the hero's inner monologues lend an emotional lyrical colour to the whole ballad.

The writer shows that the beastly conditions of the nazi prison camp, the beatings and maltreatment have not deprived Ivan Tereshka of his Soviet mentality, his dignity, pride of his country and his resilience. The qualities which show Ivan Tereshka as a real Soviet soldier are manifested at the most dramatic moments of his life.

The image of Motherland runs through *The Alpine Ballad*. That lyrical image is portrayed through the perceptions of Ivan Tereshka and takes on concrete features. It comes up in the ballad now as the hero's reminiscences about his childhood and work on the farm, now as a dream of a future peaceful life, now in his immediate response to the inquisitive questions of Giulia about life in the Soviet Union. The image of home gets its warmth from Ivan's feeling of patriotism and is revealed by various methods. Sometimes it takes the form of monologues: "We have large forests. Virgin forests, lakes and rivers. We have the most beautiful lakes", he began to talk as memories came to him in spite of himself. "My village sits between two lakes. On a quiet evening you look at them and there is not a ripple. It is like a mirror. And you can see the forest hanging in it upside down. It's just like a picture. And fish are jumping." Sometimes Motherland appears in the author's narrative which is close to inner monologue: "...His thoughts, stirred by memories, kept harking back to his distant native land and he felt excruciating longing amid these wild jagged rocks, a kind of longing he had seldom experienced even in prison". Sometimes it is in indirect speech which verges on direct speech: "He began to tell Giulia about the oak groves strewn with acorns, the beaver houses on the lakes, the cool birch sap and fragrant bird cherries in May as if he was talking about something very distant, very dear and unusual." But in whatever shape they

are cast all the hero's reminiscences have about them a lyrical and confessional mood. Thoughts about Motherland, memories about his parents and his village are always present in the hero's mind, and they become particularly poignant in alien lands at a time when his life is in danger.

Structurally, the inner monologues in this story are very diverse. More often than not the author uses these to convey the hero's pattern of thoughts and feelings.

"'The road!' thought Ivan sadly. Some road. It passes through the Alps, through gorges and rivers and through densely populated valleys and busy highways. The partisan-held Trieste of which he had heard so much in the prison camp is not so near. But they didn't have much of a choice and if they had been lucky enough to break out of the inferno it would be stupid to allow himself to be hanged on a noose to the beating of drums.

"So he must go on. He must walk and climb and run! Not to lose heart. To collect his strength, use all his experience and prowess, to cross the main ridge and find the partisans—Yugoslavs or Italians—it doesn't matter. The main thing is to be back among fighters. This is how Ivan now saw the meaning of his life, his supreme calling and reward for all the suffering and humiliation he had experienced during a year as a prisoner."

The author knows that inner monologue is a delicate instrument and he handles it with care. His inner monologues mesh in with the general system of artistic means and they come on imperceptibly as an organic part of the ballad's lyrical structure. The colour of the landscapes, the hero's poignant feelings and thoughts are reflected in the structure of the inner monologue, the similes, associations and contrasts.

Inner monologue in *The Alpine Ballad* might have appeared as a mannerism if it were not part of the artistic means, and if it were not prompted by the situation. The hero's inner monologue is artistically motivated and that is why the writer does not hesitate to have his hero say some lofty words about his love for his country, hatred of fascism, and the inevitable victory of the Soviet Army over Hitlerite invaders. These words are charged with emotion because they express the innermost feelings and thoughts of the hero.

These lofty feelings and thoughts follow the laws of

dramatic art, have deep motivation in life and are determined by a clash of confronting forces. They reach a climax and are suddenly cut short by the hero's tragic death. All the artistic means—inner monologue, descriptions, dialogue, direct speech and landscape—get an emotional colouring and lend an elevated and heroic character to the ballad's style.

Here we see Ivan crossing a mountain pass with Giulia at night. It is snowing. And Ivan's bare feet are aching from cold and cut by sharp stones. Giulia, all her strength having left her, sinks to the snow like a wounded bird and refuses to go on. She does not respond to exhortation or threats. She is resigned to the idea of dying. Two feelings clash in Ivan—the instinct of self-preservation and concern for his companion.

The feeling of care for another human being prevails. Ivan, himself deadly tired, heaves Giulia on his shoulders and carries her across the pass.

That dramatic situation is described with poignant lyricism. The author conveys the storm of his hero's feelings through external details. Ivan derives pleasure from the sense of acting right. And like an Alpine skier climbing a slope he leans forward and furiously pushes his way up aware of Giulia calming down on his back and feeling a hot tear run slowly behind his collar.

The mountainscape which provides the background for the scene underlines the enormous effort and the strength of will which Ivan displayed in carrying Giulia away from her death, in pushing towards his goal. The landscape, first seen through the eyes of the hero, shades off into inner monologue. Thus the lofty feelings of Ivan are dramatised. At this trying moment they warm the harassed man and fill him with joy because he is doing a good deed.

Vasil Bykov describes the budding love and sympathy between Ivan and Giulia with a feeling of beauty characteristic of a genuine talent. The lyrical element becomes particularly pronounced at that point. Romantic methods (sharp contrasts, vivid colours in describing landscapes, elevated style in telling about feelings, author's digressions interspersed with bits of the hero's inner monologue) help the writer to show that the growing love is a triumph of humanity over the forces of evil, darkness, and violence.

Vasil Bykov draws a vivid portrait of the Italian girl Giulia and conveys her manner of talk (which is a mixture

of garbled Russian and German words with Italian speech). He follows the evolution of their love through several phases. At first Ivan treats Giulia with suspicion. But after hearing about her life story and her suffering, and learning that Giulia had behaved heroically in her own way (she broke with her merchant father, became close with Italian communists and took an active part in fighting fascists in Italy) he changes his attitude and comes to regard Giulia as a kindred soul. The main thing behind their mutual attraction, their trust and eventual love is the spiritual affinity, the shared goals of fighters who escaped a fascist prison camp and are prepared to fight nazism until last.

The chapters about Ivan's love are like an inspired poem or symphony praising the great miracle of love which happens in an unusual situation. There is a certain link between the descriptive methods in Bykov's ballad with the methods of Maxim Gorky's early romantic legends of love and his *Tales About Italy*. Gorky described love as the fullest existence of man beautiful in every respect. Romantic methods enabled him to avoid naturalism and convey the inspiration of love (*The Girl and Death*, *Tales About Italy*, etc.). The physical and spiritual perfection of Gorky's heroes remind one of antique sculptures.

And this is how Vasil Bykov seeks to depict his heroes. They are spiritually and physically beautiful in spite of the untold suffering through which they have gone. Ivan is not only perceptive of the beauty of nature. He experiences a kind of blushing joy admiring Giulia's physical beauty.

Chernyshevsky used to say that it is an incredibly difficult task to convey the beauty of the human body by verbal means. Only an inspired poet, he said, can keep a sense of proportion and balance. Vasil Bykov largely succeeds in preserving it. Giulia's beauty in *The Alpine Ballad* is shown through the eyes of Ivan. He marvels how Giulia is transformed when she throws off her prisoner's clothes and he sees her bathing in the emerald spluttering waterfall. Dramatic contrasts and romantic methods convey the budding sense of beauty in Ivan's mind. Giulia appears to him as other-worldly "in her virginal perfection full of mystery and virtue". He compares her with a bird which is "ready to flutter and disappear at the slightest rustle".

The view of that beauty sends pangs of exhilaration through Ivan and provokes happy thoughts and a sense of

the fullness of being. It is happiness, the ultimate meaning of life, its ideal. And that feeling is in stark contrast with the world of violence and evil, an antipode of the inferno from which the heroes have broken out.

The writer uses contrasts also to describe Ivan's masculine beauty and strength. At first Giulia notices only Ivan's powerful physique: "Hercules! Russo Hercules!" Then she shrinks in horror from the terrible scar left by a bayonet in Ivan's side. Horror is replaced by admiration. Giulia sees Ivan as a fighter against fascism and not as a coward who had voluntarily surrendered himself.

The landscape helps to bring out Ivan's feelings. It is not just emotionally coloured, it is in perfect harmony with Ivan's feelings and thoughts, conveying his exuberance and a sense of immortality. And that joyful feeling of beauty and love is revealed as an eternal force which is bound to triumph over the world of evil, violence and darkness. Here, as elsewhere, the contrast with nature enables the writer to reveal the depth of the hero's feelings and to poeticise them.

"This joy of his came from nowhere in particular—perhaps from the deep clear sky, the lavish sun, from the scenic beauty of the mountains and the boundless space around, or perhaps from the riotous poppies whose fragrance filled the whole valley. These mountains and meadows seemed to exude a festive warmth and he found it hard to think about danger, the prison camp and his pursuers; it occurred to him that perhaps the nightmare of the camp with SS-men, death, the stench of crematoriums and the loathsome barking of dogs never existed. And if it did exist how was it possible for this pristine blessing to exist on the same earth? What force separated this purity from the madness of humans? "

The landscapes poeticise the relationship between Ivan and Giulia, making us see it as "a human miracle" which they have experienced when they became free. The author's view, however, is far from idyllic. The narrative is laden with drama. As so often, the author resorts to contrasts to stress the complexity of life, to highlight its contradictions and emphasise the unusual conditions in which the lovers find themselves. There are notes of foreboding in the landscapes:

"Dense fog settled in the distance, the milky haze was creeping up the distant gray ridges and flooded the valley.

The Bear Ridge had lost its forest foothills and was floating as it were in the gray sea of fog. Only the highest peaks were shining, reflecting the invisible sun. It was the last farewell ray of light from an unusual day which was like an unexpected bonus. In the distance a sad lonely star was twinkling on a bleak sky."

The association of "today"—a happy and unexpected gift—and "the last farewell ray" introduces a sad note, which acquires a tragic shade in the description of a lonely star. The landscape presages a tragic outcome. The growing sense of imminent tragedy in the landscape is matched by the description of the conflicting feelings of the heroes. Giulia is dreaming about a happy future, and about motherhood while Ivan feels increasingly apprehensive:

"He turned to Giulia again. They must get up and go. But she was sleeping happily, so helpless and languorous that he could not bring himself to interrupt her sleep. He looked avidly at her face, mobile in her sleep. After what had taken place between them each smile and each little grimace took on a particular meaning; he looked at her fixedly as if she was an unfathomable mystery—a little human miracle *which he had discovered so late in his life and so happily*" (emphasis added.—V.N.).

The description of the complex feelings of the characters is crowned with Ivan's inner monologue in which his seething emotions spill out:

"He looked at the sky for a long time—alone with the universe, with hundreds of stars, large and barely noticeable, with the silvery path of the Milky Way across the whole sky—and apprehension edged out the feeling of happiness in his soul.

"During the war he had forgotten about the natural human desire of happiness. What room was there for happiness if all the strength was needed to survive and not to let himself be destroyed. Of course the time will come when people would destroy fascism and would experience the great joy of brotherhood, love without borders and constraints. Only it is unlikely that Giulia and he would live to see that time... So many trials lay ahead."

Running through this monologue of Ivan are his ideal notions of how human life should be ordered. And this highlights the humanity of the Soviet man. Aware of the danger he thinks not only about himself but also about

Giulia. And his apprehension is intensified because he feels responsible for both of them.

When a pack of fascists swoop on the fugitives, Ivan displays remarkable resource and quick reaction to slip out of the trap. He puts up a great fight for himself and for Giulia. And when forced to the wall he gives his own life to save that of his beloved.

In lieu of an epilogue *The Alpine Ballad* has a letter from Giulia to Ivan's relatives in the Byelorussian village of Tereshki. It is at once documentary and poetic, and is thus a piece of art. It is in keeping with the style of the ballad and is imbued with the great feeling of internationalism, expressing the main idea of the story. A general picture of the time and the heroic behaviour of Ivan are conveyed in that letter in which Giulia describes her great feeling and her happiness at having met a Soviet man who saved her life. The epilogue adds the last vivid touches and sounds a powerful tribute to the Soviet soldier. The publicistic, lyrical and epic elements all merge in that letter which makes its unique imprint on the whole style of Vasil Bykov's ballad.

IV

Mikhail Stelmakh's story "Flying Swans" has a poetic style all its own. Its colours are remarkably fresh and crisp. The child's poetic perception of the world is blended with notions of duty and the meaning of life. The story is an evocation of childhood, the moulding of the child's sensibilities, and the sources of the spiritual world of the Soviet writer. The past in it is not only treated as history but forms a living part of the present.

The story is narrated in the first person. It has some lyrical digressions and many chapters come across as poems or lyrical set pieces. Even so, there is an overall completeness about that story. What propels it is the author's ability to link the portrayal of a child's psychology and perception of the world with depicting the basic changes taking place in the life of a Ukrainian village with the advent of Soviet government. All this is reflected in the style of the story.

Following the best traditions of the Russian and Ukrainian literature, Mikhail Stelmakh traces the forming of a child's consciousness through discovery of the world's

mysteries which strike his imagination. The main character, the boy Mikhailik, has a keen perception of nature. The story is permeated with the poetry of Nature. Nature is not only made animate in the character's consciousness (the "pathetic fallacy" is characteristic of a child's mentality), but is seen in its changes and fine shades and shifting colours. Passing before the reader's eyes are landscapes of spring, a splendid summer, autumn, and winter shading off into each other. The seasons of the year provide a framing for the story which begins with spring (the coming of swans) and ends with the picture of a similar thaw in March, the spring landscape and in the clear air the swishing of swans' wings, like "a troubled ringing of distant bells". This composition is used not only to provide an effective closing to the narrative but conveys the feeling of time and lends a pattern and coherence to the plot. For all that, events in the story are dramatic as the orbit of the child's awareness of the world expands.

The time framework in Mikhail Stelmakh's story is highly meaningful and diverse. It includes childhood shown as the spring of human life with its unique joys and sadnesses. It also takes the shape of the seasons of the year which lie at the basis of the composition and determine the character's feelings towards nature. It is also historical time, showing the early years after the Revolution with all period detail as manifested in the life of a West Ukrainian village. Most important, there is the underlying image of the epoch which makes an indelible imprint on the consciousness of the main hero and moulds him.

Mikhail Stelmakh's story is poetic in describing the peculiar perceptions of a child and in describing the early post-revolutionary years.

The story shows that a child's awareness is formed not only by understanding the mysteries of nature but also by discovering the secrets of social life and the new features brought by the Revolution. The important thing is that Mikhail Stelmakh preserves the unique angle from which a child sees the world. The child assesses social phenomena in terms of the broad notions of good and evil, justice and injustice, beauty and ugliness. That imparts a special poetic quality to the narrative and invests the images with an important moral and philosophical message.

The child's consciousness in Stelmakh's story is shown

indirectly as a complex of feelings and thoughts prompted to a boy by communication with other people. The environment moulds his consciousness and determines the traits of his character. It is a very special kind of environment portrayed in a highly original way.

Stelmakh's story is peopled by vivid characters. In drawing his characters, the writer concentrates on their salient features, gives us a deep insight into the innermost qualities of these characters and fleshes them out, making them both individual and typical.

The writer links a generalised description of social types with concrete historical change and new phenomena in the village during the socialist revolution.

Stelmakh's story is a curious mixture of the usual and the unusual, of the real and the imaginary. The approach is motivated on the one hand by the concern to reveal a child's perception and on the other hand to show that the child lives at an unusual time and is surrounded by unusual people: his hardworking mother, Granddad Demyan, the Poor Peasant Committee Chairman Sebastian, the beautiful Marianna, and the exuberant bantering Uncle Mikola. The youthful hero is constantly exposed to their influence, especially to that of Granddad Demyan. He is an embodiment of the wisdom, industry, and humanity of the people. He tells his grandson about things that are mysterious for him in metaphoric folklore manner and the grandson assimilates and repeats the thoughts, words, and the speech of his granddad. All this is reflected in the style of the story.

The structure of the story is metaphoric and close to oral folk poetry. Mikhail Stelmakh uses freely the poetic devices of folk legend, songs, and jokes and the speech of his characters abounds in proverbs and sayings. The usual and the unusual, the real and the romantic, the everyday and the magic constantly interweave to produce a fairytale effect characteristic of Stelmakh's story. The words, apart from their direct meaning, carry an allegoric implication; and similes become, like in poetry, sustained metaphors.

Take, for instance, the beginning of the story. It tells of a child's perception of spring. A fact is depicted as a kind of miracle. The story conveys at once wonderment as the mysteries of nature (the swans herald the coming of spring) and a child's dream of happiness: "I don't want the swans to fly away. If only the birds listened to me and by some

miracle made a circle over the village and flew again over our house. If I were a magician I would sure turn them back! I would just say a magic word." A folklore image—swans flying towards quiet waters and serene dawns—becomes symbolic and expresses the little hero's sense of mystery and his feelings and wishes. Steeped in folklore tradition, the story reveals the main character's perceptions through mythological imagery: "I become lost in thought and presently I am surrounded by visions of a tale with its untrodden pathways, thick forests, and the swans which carry a little boy on their wings away from misfortune."

The speech of the characters (especially of Granddad Demyan) is replete with folklore imagery and colourful similes. Demyan thinks in a folk way and has original view on life's phenomena. He tells a legend to give the grandson an idea of the life-giving rays of the sun.

In general, the imagery of Stelmakh's story is reminiscent of folk poetry. For example, summer is identified with the image of a mysterious beautiful woman wearing a colourful shawl across her shoulders and walking in the fields and gardens. When she smiles and looks at the fruits a miracle happens: bedewed cherries begin to redden, pears grow juicy, and strawberries become like little scattered flames in the emerald green of a glade.

Stelmakh uses exalted and romantic tones to describe what is perceived by the boy as magic (the mystery of nature, the secret of human beauty and ugliness, and so on). But the magic is always firmly anchored in reality and appears as a form of child's perception. In the broad romantic pictures, like in the oral folk poetry, you can always discern the real foundation of the farmer's working life.

At the start of the story the image of spring is associated not only with the miraculous coming of swans but also with a realistic landscape drawn in a very precise manner that would be a credit to the best of realistic works. The creaking wooden well sweep, roofs with patches of green moss on them, a bluish-green oak grove on the edge of the village, the soggy black earth emerging from under its cover of snow...

Sometimes to emphasise the peculiarities of a child's view, the author describes the magic as the everyday (as in the humorous tales). Thus, in the child's mind the magic keys from Granddad's tale with which the sun opens the

soil, are associated with the keys of the lock, which mother has lost. This brings a smile and lends a humorous shade to Stelmakh's story.

The folk element is manifested also in the diversity of stylistic strands in Stelmakh's story which correspond to the associations in the minds of the characters and form the essence of the artistic vision of the writer himself.

In the description of the period and the people with whom the boy meets there is the same combination of the unusual and miraculous with the usual and real. That lends a special colour to the story. The action takes place at an unusual time and the boy meets unusual people each of whom in his own way carries the characteristic features of his time and strikes the boy's imagination.

Here is Uncle Straton, "a peasant minister". He is unlike the old government ministers. His pictures are not published in newspapers or magazines and his portraits have not been made. He is clad in the common clothes of a peasant. But he possesses the mind of a statesman and has in fact held a post of minister in the government of a republic of poor peasants formed by a group of Ukrainian villagers who defied the *Hetmans* and the Germans and waged war against the oppressors until they were defeated. They recognised only the Soviet government. And when the "republic" was defeated, Straton along with the other Civil War soldiers took to the woods to become a partisan fighting for the revolution. Now Uncle Straton is chairman of the Poor Peasants' Committee in the neighbouring village. He comes over to Granddad Demyan to have his wooden plough mended. "All the steel has gone for death and nothing remains for life", he tells the granddad. And he goes on to explain: "I had three brothers and not one of them lived to see the end of the war. The elder one died in France. But sorrow or no sorrow, you must plough and you must sow." A finishing touch to the description of Straton is added by his favourite saying "The world is full of wonders."

A similar approach is used by the author to describe Sebastian, who conveys the idea of a revolution as a just and purifying storm which opens the road to happy life for the people. He is a man exposed to all the winds of history. Sebastian fought in all the wars and was more than once "riddled with bullets". He used to be a partisan. His appearance in the story brings with it a romantic aura of a

hero. Tall and slim, wearing a cavalry man's coat from under which projects a pistol, he has a flaming red forelock of hair struggling from under his Budyonny helmet. And yet he is one of the villagers. He is chairman of the Poor Peasants' Committee and himself a poor peasant. He lives in a simple hut and is attentive to the needs of the poor.

The author displays considerable flair in revealing Sebastian's qualities. That tough warrior, who still continues to fight the bandits, has the pure soul of a child.

One is struck by his ingenuous ideas of justice and duty. He is sincere in everything—in despising the timeserver and informer Yukhrim Babenko, and in being angry with the priest's son who has made a laughing stock of the boy Mikhailik, and the episode of the pardoning of the bandit Porfiry—the fellow-villager and childhood friend of Sebastian—recreates the period atmosphere and says a lot about the purity of the principled communist.

The author is obviously very fond of Sebastian. Many of the places in which he appears in the story are romantic and lyrical. Their lyricism is prompted by the author's admiration for the personality of an early communist, a hero of the Revolution and Civil War who embodies the best features of the builder of a new world. Sebastian is a historically concrete character. The author keeps his touch with reality and describes the character in all his individuality. The poetic strand in the story comes from the unusual and the elevated features which are found in usual things. And this strikes Mikhailik's imagination and that of the reader as conforming to the people's spirit and justice. A kind of friendship develops between Sebastian and the boy Mikhailik. Along with Granddad Demyan, Uncle Sebastian is the main formative influence on the boy.

The author openly admires the first communist in the village. On two occasions the description inspires him to a lyrical digression. These digressions draw on major social phenomena and establish the link between the past, present and future. They breathe history and are vibrant with emotion.

Take, for example, the lyrical digression which crowns the story about a mysterious book called *Cosmography*. The priest's son decides to humiliate the "child of a muzhik" who has a thirst for knowledge, and gives him a book to read which is beyond his comprehension. Sebastian too is

not equipped to explain the book to the boy. But his native intelligence prompts him these prophetic words: "Mikhailo, this book is about the sky. And the main thing for us now is to know the earth, to know it and to share it among poor people and then we'll start to work on the sky." That story is used by the author to make a link with the present time and impart a lyrical message to Sebastian's thoughts:

"So many years have passed since then. I had almost forgotten the old story of the cosmography book when mean people wanted to have a laugh at the expense of a peasant child. But all this came back to me on the day when a peasant son of my native land went into outer space for the first time in human history... Indeed, he laughs best who laughs last."

It is Sebastian who convinces the boy that now, after the Revolution, he has boundless opportunities in a new life. Mikhailik can accomplish anything, he can acquire an education, read any books he likes, and even himself become a teacher and bring education to the masses. The narrative thus gets a historical perspective and sweep. The dialogue between the boy and Sebastian naturally leads to a lyrical digression:

"Uncle Sebastian, you sure aren't kidding? "

"What do you mean? " says the chairman, kindly wrinkles gathering around his eyes.

"I mean, you said I could be a teacher."

"I am not kidding, Mikhailo... Some day when you become educated you will remember my words and remember me, and I'll be an old man then. And you will drop in on me and teach me a thing or two. Will you remember? "

"How can you forget such a thing? " I sigh at once believing and not believing that such a time will ever come. But my excited imagination carries me on its new wings to the years when I, a teacher, enter the house of an aged Uncle Sebastian and show him my respect and appreciation...

"Uncle Sebastian, my first good prophet, my joy and sadness. You are long since dead but your deep and kindly eyes still shine to me, and the warmth of your heart survives in the people who used to know you. And let people's gratitude and my words be a monument to you."

The positive characters in the story—Sebastian's comrades, and the foresters Sergei and Artyom who fight the

bandits—have a romantic aura about them. In their flowing coats which smell of the steppe, of the winds and gunpowder, and their pointed hoods spread on their shoulders, they appear to the boy as “the knights of the Zaporozhye lands”. They are intrepid people. They are good with grenades, are confident of their strength and the justice of their cause. And at the same time they are ordinary husky village lads who like their jokes, laugh at the high-sounding talk of Yukhrim Babenko and understand the interests of a child. Naturally, these people make a strong impression on the boy. Little Mikhailik wants to resemble them. The story about the foresters and about the Red Army patrol whom Granddad Demyan and Mikhailik met on the road at night, the story of the first commune and its members who have to go to work carrying arms—all these are told by the author with admiration. All these evoke the legendary time and bring to life ordinary people in all their greatness and truthfulness, people who have become legends and have made history.

The camp of the enemies of the Revolution is shown in a very different manner. The author’s style becomes laden with irony and sarcasm. As in folklore, the satirical characters have one or two outstanding features which make them readily identifiable types: the church warden who spreads slanderous rumours about Soviet government; the kulak Vladimir who is so greedy that he drives and goads not only his labourers but also his children; the priest’s son who hates Soviet government and despises peasant children as “plebeians”. Everything that opposes the Revolution appears as ugly and perverted.

The author preserves a historically valid approach. His negative characters have traits which reflect real phenomena in all their individuality. The colourful satirical picture of the time-server and tattler Yukhrim Babenko leads us to regard him as a kind of scum raised by the revolutionary times. The author uses grotesque and folk humour, to describe him and bring out his negative features. For example, the author tells us with irony about Yukhrim Babenko’s swaggering manner of dressing and talking. He wears an odd kind of breeches in whose legs “there is room enough for a good-sized pig (at that time breeches were all the rage, the wider the better)”. And he likes to show off his knowledge of bookish words: “paragraph”, “statute”, “classification”,

which he often misuses. He passes himself off as a Civil War veteran although he actually avoided the draft by shooting his hand. He is by no means a harmless creature. He is intent of getting a promotion by hook or by crook. He slanders Sebastian alleging that the latter was not vigilant enough (by pardoning the bandit Porfiry who had surrendered himself to the Soviet authorities).

The author exposes Babenko's depravity with wrath and sarcasm. Many pages are filled with searing irony with regard to that swaggering, selfish and narrow-minded man (the story with the reference which Sebastian gave to Yukhrim Babenko).

The world of justice, kindness and beauty in Stelmakh's story challenges the world of evil, lust for gain and moral depravity. The little hero is involved in that struggle. Stelmakh shows how the boy is confronted with everyday reality and how this shapes his consciousness. He admires those who work for the common wealth, himself tries to do his best to uphold justice and comes to hate all those who are unkind and evil. The social and moral elements are blended in the boy's mind and determine his ideas about life and people.

The writer looks poetically at the morally pure working people. The beautiful girl Marianna, the priest's handmaid, is compared with sunrise and with a bright star. She thinks it is her duty to do good. Marianna is not only physically beautiful but she has a beautiful soul and is drawn to good and beautiful.

There is genuine poetry about the image of the mother, a selfless worker who loves people and wants her son to grow up to be worthy man. Mother was the first to introduce the son to the delights of labour, open to him the beauty of nature and instil love for poor people.

A recurring contrast in the story is between working people and the selfish wealthies. While Marianna is beautiful because of her sincere and genuine love for people, the priest's wife is ugly and repugnant. She bullies her servants: "hisses and hisses like scrambled eggs on a frying pan". Granddad Demyan with his gift for bringing joy to people is opposed to the landowner who tries to appropriate a sculpture of the Apostles made by the Granddad. Uncle Mikola, who brings good cheer wherever he goes and is never in low spirits no matter how bad things may be, is

opposed to the kulak Vladimir who is intent on "grabbing" anything he can lay his hands on while all the time he whines about his poor lot, boring people with talk about his mishaps.

There is genuine humanism about the story of the boy sharing a handful of pumpkin seeds with a hungry child. A village kulak grudged a potato and gave nothing to the hunger-stricken boy and his poor mother while Mikhailik readily gives away what is most precious to him. Mother approves of her son's behaviour. "Who else could help a poor man, who else could give him a piece of bread or a spoonful of soup? None but poor folks like themselves."

The positive heroes in the story are considerate of other people.

Granddad Demyan has such affection for his wife, "Grandma", that he would never wake her up when he returns from work late at night. He sits quietly in front of his house guarding the sleep of his life's companion. Marianna, Uncle Sebastian and Mikola show moving care and understanding for the little hero.

The author freely draws on devices used in folklore. The speech of the characters, for example, is full of folklore images and expressions. The hero's mother, in particular, talks in a sing-song manner which is reminiscent of folk tales. Preparing seeds for sowing, the mother talks to the earth and the seeds as if they were living creatures. She addresses them in a manner one finds in folklore legends. She praises some seeds and curses others.

"Oh, you peas, how did you allow worms in you last summer? ' she admonishes the good peas.

"See that nothing like this happens this year. And you Bean, you are all black, what's eating you? "

Harmony with Nature, which is such a feature of folk poetic art, is very prominent in Mother's speech when she talks about summer. And the image of summer, which is treated like a living creature, is described in a folklore manner: "May sailed away in a little boat, and took along with it the blue rains, the rustling of trees, and the singing of nightingales, and summer peeped into the village over the hedges."

Stelmakh poeticises work as the source of life on earth. He sings a hymn to working people who have lived through much hardship but are happy that they had not lived in vain

and that their work had been useful for other people. Work ennobles man. For example, Granddad Demyan is a nimble craftsman who has preserved kindness and appreciation of beauty in spite of the telltale wrinkles on his forehead, which make one think of the lean years, and endless work. The boy preserved a life-long love for that man.

The author poeticises work in his lyrical digressions and some of his images are reminiscent of *bylinas* (Russian heroic lore):

"I remember the festive mood when the first ploughmen were sent off to the field. When they returned home in the evening old and young alike were there to meet them. And there was no end to joy if a ploughman produced a piece of dry bread from his sack and said it was from the rabbit. It was the most delicious bread of my childhood. And it was a real red-letter day when I was allowed to man the plough and make the first furrow. To this day I hear from the depth of the past years the voice of my father, who one sulky morning put me, happy and excited, behind a plough and himself took care of the horses. This is how he told about it at home: 'Clouds converged upon us, thunder clapped above us, and lightning bolted behind us and in front of us and we went on ploughing.'"

Stelmakh's story describes the people's worship of knowledge and his heroes' thirst for learning with compelling poetic force. Everybody advises Mikhailik to study; Sebastian, the Red Army patrol commander and Marianna, all believe he would do well at learning. Marianna sums up these feelings when she tells the boy: "Go and study, Mikhailik, study so that everybody would see what peasant children can do. Let not the rich men, their underlings and other riff-raff say that we are like cattle. Perhaps it used to be so but no longer!"

Thirst for knowledge and education is a powerful motive in Stelmakh's story which makes one recall Gorky. Alyosha in Maxim Gorky's autobiographical trilogy could have submitted to daily flogging in public if only he were to be given a chance to study. And the boy in Stelmakh's story is prepared to withstand as much suffering in order to study or to get a book he needs. The story of the lean days in the hero's life when he had no warm boots to go to school in winter and when Father used to wrap his feet and carry him to school is told with harrowing impact. And what a

happy day it was for the boy when Father at last was able to buy him boots! Stelmakh shows the daily joys and sorrows of peasant life and the overcoming of difficulties as phases in the evolution of the character, the moulding of his consciousness.

Education in Stelmakh's story is shown as a miracle. It is the future of our hero. It is not accidental that references are made to the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko and the Russian scientist and poet Mikhail Lomonosov. But before the Revolution the people's gifts could not freely manifest themselves. Children had to earn their daily bread and not to study. The Granddad says: "Everyone was in need of bread, just everyone. And everyone needed our children to do errands for them and not to go to school. And so it came to be that our feet are bare and we have nothing in our heads." After the Revolution the situation changed dramatically and the doors of science were flung wide open for the peasant children. Stelmakh, however, tells us with strict realism that even in the early years of Soviet government poor peasant families found it hard to send their children to schools in the cities. There is a poignant scene in which Mother begs Father to send the son to secondary school to carry on his education. Father replies:

"How can I afford to teach him if we are strangled by poverty. If I could pawn my hands I would pawn them to the last finger and go begging in fair grounds."

"But you see, Panas, how eager he is to study. Do something, Panas."

"Father's eyes grew white with impotent fury and the veins on his temples became swollen.

"Don't be so hard on me. What can I do if there is need wherever you look?"

"Then sell the cow, Panas."

"The cow? What do you mean? 'A hush settled over the hut. Everybody knows what a cow means for a poor peasant family. Even Mother fell silent.

"Eventually Father resigned to the lot of a poor peasant, sold the cow and I went to school."

Dialogue in Stelmakh's story is very taut and does a lot to reveal the main qualities of the hero. It is usually concluded with an apt phrase and a punchline which carry a special semantic load. Thus, the argument between Yukhrim Babenko and an old man from the Poor Peasants' Com-

mittee about the meaning of life is sealed by the apt phrase of the wise old man which pins down Yukhrim as a new-fangled braggart: "You had no time to become a human being."

Aphorisms, along with proverbs, stud the lyrical monologues of the hero and have an emotional and poetic colouring expressing the state of his mind. The author provides us with a sampling of aphorisms.

Stelmakh is aware of the expressive potential of words. That awareness comes from his extensive and subtle observation, his deep knowledge of life and the secrets of human feelings. The writer can see beauty which may escape a casual eye. Here is a poetic miniature about a snowdrop:

"I bend over a circle of porous snow which hugs a young brush. Something has pierced the snow and I dig it up and see a tender snowdrop in bud. It has made a hole in the snow by its breath and is straining towards the sun. So the forest is no longer dead because the swans have brought spring and life on their wings." There are many such poetic miniatures in Stelmakh's story. Entire chapters are rather like poems in prose (the chapter about the gathering of mushrooms, about Mikhailik and Lyuba discovering the secrets of the woods—the badger's hole, a wagtail's nest, a spring which spouts from the foot of a craggy tree stump).

The writer has a rare gift of poetic expression. Paraphrasing him, one can say that he really has a way with words and they are a real delight.

The second part of the dilogy, which is a natural sequel to the pictures drawn in "Flying Swans" is called "A Happy Evening". The story is written in the same poetic key. Only Mikhailik is now at school. He is growing up fast and becomes more keenly aware of the contradictions in life and can more readily tell good from evil.

The writer does not gloss over the difficulties through which the poor peasants and their children had to live in the early years of Soviet government. Mikhailik's poverty-stricken father at one point even wants to move from his native place to the remote Kherson area. It is remarkable, however, that there is not a trace of gloom in "A Happy Evening", just like in "Flying Swans". On the contrary, the general tone of the narrative is bright and joyous. All the pictures are washed in the inner glow of Mikhailik discovering the mysteries of the world. They are permeated with

humour which emphasises the joy of living. Everything in Stelmakh's stories makes one aware of the wide world set in motion during the Revolution, undergoing sweeping change and making its path to the future.

Many things in Stelmakh's stories project them into the future. One is clearly aware of this reading the description of Sebastian with his romantic élan and confidence in a better future. Sebastian is akin to Makar Nagulnov from Sholokhov's novel. But he is more gentle and kind towards people. The friendship between Sebastian and the boy Mikhailik takes on a symbolic significance. Both are the children of a new world growing up together with that world.

The projection into the future is also present in Stelmakh's description of the people (Granddad Korney who has helped partisans and was cruelly punished by the Denikin men, or the bard Granddad Levko; a talented self-taught potter and artist Danko whose work brings joy to people). All these characters are keepers of folk wisdom. Their moral philosophy, imbued with faith in the triumph of good over evil, beauty over ugliness, warms the child's soul and imparts a special tone to the whole story. The people creates all the values on earth and is the keeper of all the eternal truths.

Mikhailik in Stelmakh's stories matures by becoming exposed to the moral experience of the people for whom the Revolution opened up great vistas. And accordingly, the maturing of Mikhailik makes us aware of the march of history. The Revolution appears not just as an event which meets the aspirations and notions of the people but also as a force which shapes the future and offers an outlet for all the talents and the vitality of the people which used to be thwarted by tsarism. The life of a peasant lad who in the early years of Soviet government got a chance to study, to read books, and to write a play about the Revolution when in his fourth grade, is more than just an autobiography. It is the story of a nation and its qualities which were released by the Revolution and influenced the lives of millions, including Mikhailik. The Revolution discovered his creative ability, and brought forth the qualities which would make him a writer. It is a poetically told story of a Soviet writer rising from the midst of the people.

The past is evoked in an original way. The author's approach to describing heroes is traditional for Soviet

literature. This is the approach used by Gorky to show the evolution of Alyosha Peshkov in his autobiographical trilogy. The Revolution brings forth the best that there is in the people to produce a new thrust towards the future. And that lends scope and emotion to the account of events. Events of the recent past are in Stelmakh's stories part of the heroic present and are projected into the future. And when the author writes in "A Happy Evening": "The children of the country which set the pace for the new world, had to live through a lot of hardship... Wars, economic disarray, blockades, and scarcities made the peasant fall back on the wooden plough, the home-made loom, and the bleak paraffin lamps. Our young history marched through villages not in a brocade dress but in a rough home-spun cover, and all the same its merry blue eyes radiated hope"—we involuntarily feel the breath of history. We become aware of the great strength of the people's spirit and of its powerful *energy* which overcame all trials and was tempered and multiplied in the struggle for the flourishing of our country. The fact that the past is looked at in the light of the present and the future confers a cheerful upbeat mood on Stelmakh's stories.

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It will be seen from the foregoing that lyricism is a concrete notion, and lyrical methods and forms of typification are manifested differently in every work depending on the conceptual and artistic goals the artist sets before him.

The growing lyrical trend in modern prose is not accidental. As has been noted, this is due to many reasons but the chief one is that the lyrical form enables Soviet writers to respond to the demands of the reader, poeticise the thoughts and feelings of the hero, express an attitude towards current developments, and write a book of contemporary relevance. It is another question that the inherent opportunities offered by the lyrical genre are used differently by different writers. It is common knowledge that a narrowing of the great artistic tasks and a harbouring of individual, sometimes morbid feelings and experiences which are of no interest to anyone, may turn a lyrical story into a "confession of a man whom no one needs".

On the other hand, an artist whose horizons encompass

the whole world and whose self merges with the nation and his time can be said to feel the winds of the century. And then the artist uses the lyrical form to express what is of concern not only to him alone but to millions of the builders of a new world, and to reveal the attractiveness and richness of the new phenomena of life.

The above analysis of some stories has shown that the lyrical form of typification can easily take in other methods and forms and combine with epic methods of individualisation and generalisation and drama as the expression of clashing forces of history (*The Alpine Ballad* by Vasil Bykov). This is a very original synthesis of various methods, with the lyrical element predominating. This synthesis is manifested differently in each particular case but it undoubtedly creates new methods (lyricism penetrating into epic prose, drama, and the cinema, transforming their genres and leaving an imprint on the whole style of the entire work).

The search in this field is now very intense. It is significant that lyrical stories have appeared in all the national republics of the Soviet Union. And we are certain to witness new discoveries along that road.

TO SEE THE DIALECTIC OF LIFE

I

Contemporary art probes ever deeper into the inner world of man and the dialectic of his thoughts and feelings. Soviet writers and artists are searching for new means of typification and new principles of generalisation in order to give a many-sided, profound, and dialectical picture of the dramatic change in the Soviet man's mentality, the moulding of a communist individual.

In this context, there is a more and more acute need for writings which make important generalisations, have vivid characters reflecting the struggle between the new and the old in the hearts and minds of people, and the fundamental changes in their mentality.

Critics have rightly pointed out the growing analytical quality of Soviet prose. But in doing so two errors sometimes crept in. Some critics maintained that the analytical approach meant the depiction of the negative side of life and claimed that Soviet literature could best perform its didactic function by taking up the "sore" questions of the day. Some, on the other hand, tended to reduce the analytical approach in literature to the depiction of the circumstances of life forgetting that in art analysis and synthesis form a unity and that it is impossible to analyse circumstances and depict the dialectic of life without typifying heroes. The emphasis on "circumstances" split the creative process, revealing one-sidedness in the judgements of critics whenever they discussed the main trend of Soviet literature.

For example, speaking at a conference on "Topical Issues of Socialist Realism" organised by the USSR Academy of Sciences' Gorky Institute of World Literature (Moscow) the critic Mikhail Kuznetsov declared: "The present trend in literary development consists not in literature giving up the

hero but in making circumstances more humane. The main thrust of literature today is a comprehensive and frank investigation of the dialectical complexity of contemporary typical circumstances." The literary critic Vera Timofeyeva challenged Mikhail Kuznetsov and invoked Gorky's statement to the effect that the main goal of art was to depict people in modernity; literature helps society by putting up for nation-wide discussion new emergent types of characters. It is wrong to say that the only aim of literature is to analyse circumstances. "In the final analysis it is through the hero that we understand circumstances," said Vera Timofeyeva.

The discussion raised some complex problems which are still to be resolved. The main question is how to combine analysis and synthesis, and concreteness and universality in depicting the new contradictions of life and describing the emerging social types. How to reveal the dialectic of the soul, the increased intellectual level of the hero, his active attitude towards circumstances without going to extremes, without confining oneself to one aspect of a phenomenon and without being preoccupied only with contradictory circumstances or the controversial experiences of heroes which are claimed to be interesting in themselves, outside the context of the typical phenomena of the time? In short, the question is how to create characters and types reflecting the new historical truth, i.e., the rapid development and moulding of the new personality and the prevalence of communist attitudes and new forms of consciousness over outdated attitudes which impede our forward movement.

II

A valid methodological basis for solving all these complex problems is offered to Soviet writers and artists by Lenin's teaching about a dialectically integral perception of the world, about the need to see the perspective of development taking into account all the circumstances, favourable and adverse, through objective and scientific analysis of phenomena in their totality.

The analysis of circumstances is the starting point in gaining knowledge of the world. Lenin greatly valued the

classical writers of critical realism for their truthful depiction of the "environment", i.e., the circumstances of life. For Lenin, the work of Lev Tolstoy offered the highest example of analysis of circumstances with all their contradictions, an example of truthful portrayal of the epoch. Lenin's articles about Tolstoy set a model of Marxist analysis of complex phenomena. At the same time Lenin proceeds from the example of Tolstoy to show that in a pre-socialist society life's contradictions may lead to glaring inconsistencies in the work and views of artists. Even Tolstoy's genius which has broken through the centuries and created immortal works, was hamstrung by contradictions whenever he became victim of prejudice and failed to rise to the level of most advanced thinking of his time. The main task of the artist is to discern behind all the contradictions the dialectic of development and the renewal of life at crucial points of history. Then the artist's subjective ideas coincide with objective truth and the characters ring true to life. Analysis (penetration into reality) and synthesis (typification) are then in harmony. Let it be stressed that an artist can only achieve that through a creative process, by penetrating into new phenomena of life and typifying them. And that is where the unity of the analytical and the synthetic method of thought is manifested with particular clarity.

It is interesting to note that in making a conspectus of Hegel's book *The Science of Logic*, Lenin paid particular attention to the German thinker's definition of analytical and synthetic modes of cognition. Lenin totally subscribed to these definitions.

Hegel does not oppose the analytical approach to the synthetic, defining the qualities of each and stressing their advantages. In Hegel's view, "analytic cognition is the first premise of the whole syllogism—the immediate relation of the Notion to the Object. Consequently, identity is the determination which it recognises as its own: it is only the apprehension of what is".¹ The adherents of the theory of the "truth of fact" and immediate impressions as the basis of truthful art proceed from this understanding of the analytical cognition and do not go beyond it. But Hegel did go beyond it. He saw the unity of the synthetic and

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 209.

analytical cognition and, furthermore, believed that synthetic cognition has a number of advantages because it is "the second premise of the syllogism", more comprehensive than the former: "synthetic Cognition endeavours to form a Notion of what is, that is, to grasp the multiplicity of determinations in its unity. Hence it is the second premise of the syllogism in which terms various as such are related. Its goal is therefore necessity in general".¹

Even so, Hegel, whose thought was dialectical, did not put either of the two modes of thought—analysis or synthesis—above the other, and saw the unity of these modes of thought at all stages of cognition. Lenin spoke about it in still more definite terms. He pointed out that the unity of analytical and synthetic modes of thought increases in the process of generalisation, in the process of rising—in a spiral—from the concrete to the abstract. That "proceeding" does not become divorced from its basis, i.e., from concreteness and analysis, "provided it is *correct*".² Lenin underlines the word "correct" and puts the *nota bene* mark next to it because this thesis is of fundamental importance for him in revealing the dialectic of cognition. According to Lenin, the proceeding from the concrete to the abstract in the process of generalisation reflects the truth deeper, more precisely and fully provided the integral perception of the world is preserved and the unity of the analytical and synthetic methods of thought maintained. "Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract—provided it is *correct* (NB)...—does not get away *from* the truth but comes closer to it. The abstraction of *matter*, of a *law* of nature, the abstraction of *value*, etc., in short, *all* scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely."³ It was in this sense and in this frame of reference that Lenin used the famous expression "to retreat in order to hit more surely—reculer pur mieux sauter (savoir?)"⁴

Lenin spoke highly about artistic thought and the perception of the world through images, a perception in which there is unity of analytical and synthetic elements at all the stages of cognition (creation) and which makes it possible to

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-780.

reflect contradictory phenomena in their integrity. Lenin had made many judgements on this question. He was aware of and valued many diverse methods of generalising the concrete in art provided they proceeded from valid notions and were not abstractions for the sake of abstraction as in the case of futurists and surrealists. Lenin was resolutely opposed to one-sidedness. He believed that any one-sidedness and inflation of one trait, divorcement of facts from the overall phenomena led to distortion of reality. He was in favour of a whole perception of the world, of "divining" general phenomena behind the fact.

One might recall in this connection Lenin's famous definition, in his notes "On the Question of Dialectics", of the process of dialectically whole perception of the world in which analysis and synthesis are necessarily combined because it is only in this way that one can understand the movement of the world and learn about its regularities: "...the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc., etc. Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other *kinds* of individuals (things, phenomena, processes), etc."¹

Because typification in the process of artistic cognition begins by selecting facts, i.e., by analysing reality, the ability to see the connection between phenomena and perceive the contradictions of life in their wholeness without losing sight of the perspective of development is of particular significance for us. Besides, the requirement of dialectically whole perception of the world, and the unity between the analytical and synthetic modes of cognition, is particularly relevant today to whatever phenomena the artist turns and whatever new methods of generalisation he may use. In the context of contemporary Soviet literature and art this is due to many causes. One of them is that the contradictions of life have acquired a completely new character, the pace of life has quickened, the interconnec-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 361.

tion of facts has become universal and the concepts of the typical, the particular and the characteristic have changed. Most important of all, art increasingly prefers indirect portrayal of life's contradictions as reflected in the minds and hearts of the heroes. That reveals a new aspect to the problem of relationship between the concrete and the general, the particular and the typical. The unity of the analytical and synthetic approaches at all stages of artistic creation manifests itself in a new way.

III

The complex thoughts and feelings of the hero and contradictory circumstances in a piece of writing are a means of revealing the typical in life. A character in the work of a major artist is a microcosm which reflects the totality of social relations in a unique form. Analysis of the contradictions of life and of the experiences of the hero is always geared to a certain aim which is achieved with the help of synthetic means of typification. A work of art is of its very nature synthesis which distils the artist's view of the world. It is based on analysis of facts. The range of the means of analysis and of methods of typification is illimitable. But art has a loftier purpose than just recording facts which are interesting in themselves. The aim of art is to give a true idea of the general by showing the particular (typical characters). And there again it is important to combine the analytical and synthetic approach to life. Without synthesis the artist cannot achieve a whole perception of the general, nor can he achieve completeness and harmony in depicting characters, building the plot and composition.

The question of the unity of the analytical and synthetic approaches assumes particular importance when the writer turns to the central problem of our time, the moulding of a new man.

Soviet literature has created many complex and vivid characters reflecting the contradictory phenomena of life in their dialectical interconnection and development.

Contradictions rent apart many heroes in our literature ranging from Kondrat Maidannikov in Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned*, to Sigitas Selis in *The Kaunas Novel*

by Alfonsas Bieliauskas, Egons Livs' *The Devilish Whopper* and the heroes of Konstantin Simonov's wartime novels. And yet these characters strike us as being all of a piece. It happens because the writer in portraying his characters is not concerned only to reveal their contradictory qualities and flaws. On the contrary, no matter how complex a hero, new consciousness is shaped and prevails in his mind. This dominant trend is more often than not related to the leading social trends and acquires decisive significance in the portrayal of the character's thoughts, feelings, and acts, in describing the shifts in his mental make-up. This dominant feature provides a means to an original individual expression of the most characteristic processes of reality. The more significant works treat the character in evolution, identifying what is possible in reality and creating a social type.

The characters experience moral upheavals and are exposed to trials, but the new consciousness prevails all the same. The heroes are fighters for the communist ideals. This is a general characteristic feature of Soviet life which becomes more and more significant at every stage of our development and influences the work of artists.

The Kaunas Novel by Alfonsas Bieliauskas portrays a character reflecting the contradictions of life. The novel is complex in structure and uses inner monologue to convey the hero's stream of consciousness. But it is a realistic novel. The stream of consciousness monologue is geared to an important aim and is used to reveal the gamut of the feelings of the hero, who is aware of the gap between his actions and his moral ideal. His experiences are poignant. A young Komsomol worker acts dishonestly for the sake of personal well-being and illusory happiness and thus commits himself to a line of behaviour which runs counter to his duty and honour.

The novel has much reflection, and the contradictory feelings which torment the hero gradually build up to a climax. At times the author lays on the colours too thick in describing the circumstances which prompted the character's dishonest behaviour and thus seems to absolve the hero of his errors. But the main aim of the novel is to show how the hero gradually acquires a new mentality and a sense of responsibility for his acts. The character, Sigita Selis, undergoes a complex evolution. He experiences moral

traumas and faces many tests and in the process his character is freed of negative influences. He becomes imbued with a new consciousness. The author takes an unequivocal stand with regard to the hero and the negative phenomena of life. His hero is active in his thoughts and life. He himself judges himself by the highest standards of morality. What propels the evolution of the character is the growth of the positive aspects in his consciousness, the eventual triumph of robust feelings. He is a living person and not just a thinking brain.

The structure and main idea of *The Kaunas Novel* challenges the work of those writers who use the stream of consciousness technique to show a fragmented consciousness, to record momentary irrational impressions which leave no room for the thoughts and feelings of the hero (as in Andrei Bitov's *Penelope*).

Depicting the moulding of a character and the development of a new consciousness is a highly responsible and complex task: life is always richer than our subjective ideas of it. Lenin often quoted Hegel's statement to the effect that the contradictions in life are richer than we imagine them to be. Reality has its objective force and it dictates its terms to the artist. Not every artist is capable of completely grasping reality.

The literary and public figure Vorovsky had a point when he said that the domain of artistic creation is stable psychological phenomena. It is rather more difficult for an artist to discover new characters and identify budding social types. Gorky said that the writer needs the gift of foresight and must include in the depiction of the present "the third reality", i.e., the *future*, and reveal the possible in the existing by means of art. A deeper insight into life is impossible without looking towards the future, without revealing the new contradictions and conflicts in their dialectical development. And that makes important the author's point of view, his conceptions of reality, his stand.

Gorky used to say that a literary type is a hypothesis. And he compared generalisation and the creation of artistic types with scientific discoveries, with bold hypotheses which come as a result of profound knowledge of reality and of science itself, the highest achievements of scientific thought penetrating the mysteries of life:

"In order to arrive at a conclusion and come up with a hypothesis it is necessary to have experience. A hypothesis

is also a type. Underlying any hypothesis are thousands of experiments and from these experiments comes hypothesis and theory.”¹

That is why Gorky urged the need for an artist of socialist realism to “think hypothetically”,² to foresee the future from the vantage point of the present, to reveal the possible which is destined to prevail in the real. According to Gorky, this is the supreme mission of art if it is capable of contributing to revolutionary transformation of life: “Literature must understand its role as a catalyst of energy”³ latent in the masses. Then, it will be able to give a synthetic picture of the characteristic phenomena of our reality and create artistic types: “Reality is monumental and it has long needed broad canvases and broad generalisations in characters.”⁴

The opponents of socialist realism claim that it is impossible to create real characters which embody both the real and the possible truthfully and reveal the future trend of social development. They separate the notions of “what is” and “what must be” and oppose them. This leads them to proclaim that the works of socialist realism are unrealistic because they allegedly show “what must be” and not “what is” and gloss over reality.

One can hardly overstress the methodological importance of Lenin’s thesis about the need to investigate complex phenomena in their development: “Whoever wants to depict some living phenomenon in its development is inevitably and necessarily confronted with the dilemma of either running ahead or lagging behind. There is no middle course. And if ... precise reference is made to the circumstances ... then there is nothing wrong in such running ahead.”⁵

Lenin enunciated that thesis *a propos* of the study of capitalism, opposing his Marxist point of view to that of the Narodniks. The latter idealised the peasant commune and failed to see its decay and the emergent capitalist relations. Lenin described them as starry-eyed dreamers. His approach, as distinct from that of the Narodniks, was more realistic and dialectical because it revealed the growing

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, in thirty volumes, Vol. 26, p. 88.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 256.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 324.

social trend in the complex reality not statically but in perspective, by anticipating events. This anticipation had nothing to do with divorcement from reality. On the contrary, it was combined with profound analysis of circumstances which called forth a certain event or fact. That is an instance of combining the analytical and synthetic approach in perceiving complex phenomena of life.

Lenin has given many profound specimens of dialectical analysis of complex phenomena. Gorky admired the "amazing ease with which his [Lenin's.—*Ed.*] thought proceeds from trivial everyday phenomena to the broadest generalisation. This ability of his, which he had perfected to a striking degree, has always amazed me. I know of no other person with whom analysis and synthesis are in such harmony."¹

Gorky considered Lenin to be his teacher. On many occasions he benefited from Lenin's dialectical thought and valid analysis of complex phenomena. There is a methodological significance to Lenin's letter to Gorky of July 31, 1919, in which he wrote about different ways of generalisation of new phenomena. He underlined the need for an artist to combine concrete knowledge of life with a broad view of the laws of social development. There was an inner logic in Lenin's requirements. Lenin said that complex phenomena of life should be viewed in terms of the victory of the new. He said it was necessary for writers to see the underlying basis of the conflicts and to determine—in historical perspective—the relative values of what was moribund and what was nascent.

In the above-mentioned letter, Lenin admonishes Gorky for concentrating too much on one side of a complex historical phenomenon and for failing to separate the important from the secondary, for failing to assess phenomena in a proper historical perspective. "A sum of sick impressions", wrote Lenin, leads you "to sick conclusions... The result is something like communism being responsible for the privations, poverty and diseases of a besieged city!"²

Lenin advises Gorky to move into a new social sphere, to observe the sprouts of the new where they are most no-

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 30, p. 168.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 410.

ticeable, i.e., in a workers' settlement, in a village and in the army. There, it is easier to observe and to discriminate between the new and the old than in Petrograd which has sent most of its workers to the front while the remaining part of the bourgeoisie and its intellectuals are blinded by hatred of Soviet government.

Lenin in his letter to Gorky displays a remarkably keen perception of the nature of artistic work in the broad aesthetic sense. Lenin stresses the importance of emotional impressions as the source of the artist's work. It is clear from what he writes that these impressions, historically speaking, may or may not be correct depending on *what* the artist observes and *how* he observes it, and *what* his attention is focused on. Lenin is aware of the difference between the artist's and the politician's approach to phenomena. But he does not merely show the superiority of the politician over the artist when it comes to analysing the contradictions of the Revolution (in Petrograd a politician can work, but you are not a politician). Lenin's main idea is this: in analysing the complexities of the Revolution which were manifested in the "sick Petrograd" with its vast and bemused bourgeois public (and "the embittered intellectuals") one must have a particular talent and ability to combine direct observations with a broad view of events, to take a valid stand on them, "to make a political summing-up of extremely complex data". Then the artist can depict negative phenomena in the light of the leading trend—the inevitable victory of the socialist revolution, which is called upon to solve questions of historic magnitude—to put an end to slavery, poverty, hunger, and economic dislocation. But the artist should then express the point of view not of the backward workers, not of the "remainder of the aristocracy" who have a splendid ability to distort everything, picking on every trifle to vent their frenzied hatred of Soviet government, but the point of view of the advanced proletariat, "the cream of the workers" who have gone to the front and to the countryside to wage a heroic struggle for a happy future. Lenin's whole line of reasoning makes it clear that he sets great store by revolutionary world outlook in an artist's work and, ideally, favours a new type of artistic perception of the world in which the sum of immediate emotional impressions coincides with the broad understanding of the dialectic of life.

Gorky was the first such artist in the history of world literature. That is why Lenin was so attentive to Gorky. In his next letter to Gorky, dated September 15, 1919, he is still more insistent in advising him to look at the dramatic facts of revolutionary struggle from a broad historical point of view and take into account more precisely whose interests are at stake in the Revolution. He says that it would be wrong to become prey to passing moods and the howl of rotting intellectuals, and to forget about the key historic questions which are being decided in the course of the revolution. If an artist concentrates exclusively on one side of a complex phenomenon without a clear view of the perspective of development he may fail to grasp the complete historical truth.

Lenin had an astonishing gift of analysing complex phenomena and telling stark truth without, however, losing sight of the perspective of development. As Gorky stresses in his profile of Lenin, it was as if it was not Lenin but history itself speaking through his mouth. A dialectical perception of the world enabled him to view the present from the point of view of the future. Not being divorced from life but, on the contrary, deeply analysing it, he could foresee the trend of social development looking from the present "as if through a chink" (Gorky's words) and seeing the concrete outlines of the future. "He saw far ahead...", wrote Gorky about Lenin admiring his "prophetic ability to foresee all that today can and must yield to tomorrow".¹ Lenin foresaw the future with his usual remarkable vividness and clarity. As Gorky noted, "he was able to do that because one half of his great mind lived in the future; his conclusive and flexible logic presented remote future to him in forms that were highly concrete and real... Amazing clarity of reason was his strength".² His perceptions of the world brought the real and the possible together in dialectical unity. This is the kind of perception for which the Soviet writer should ideally strive in depicting new phenomena.

Lenin gave a model of dialectical analysis of involved conflicts. In his 1918 article "Prophetic Words" Lenin says

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in thirty volumes, Vol. 24, pp. 377-378.

² *Ibid.*, p. 377.

that the October Revolution and the Civil War brought to a head all the contradictions of life. There are some men of letters who see the Revolution superficially, bemoan the horrors, the epidemics, famine and economic disarray. But is that the only historic truth? And how should one regard that truth? Can one speak about it without taking into account the historical situation, without revealing the social roots of the economic dislocation, famine, "general demoralisation of the mass of the people" and without seeing the perspective of development? Is it enough in this complex situation to merely state a fact without revealing its significance in the light of history?

Lenin replied that one cannot approach complex phenomena in that way. It is all too easy in such an approach to distort reality, and forget who is to blame for the economic dislocation, the famine, pestilence, and "general demoralisation of the mass of the people" during the imperialist war. Speaking about the brutalities of war and its tragic consequences one cannot stop at stating the fact, one must also reveal the social roots of that complex phenomenon. One must see the basic difference between the imperialist war and the Revolution. It is not the Revolution but the imperialists, who have thrown the masses into a slaughter for the sake of their capitals, that are to blame for famine, dislocation, and "general demoralisation of the mass of the people". The Revolution is the only means to save the country, to deliver the masses from famine, epidemics, and savagery and put an end to economic dislocation.

Those who holler about economic dislocation, "the savagery of the masses" and hunger, which during the Revolution hit such industrial centres as Petrograd, were in fact not realists, says Lenin. He describes them as "bourgeois intellectual snivellers" and Chekhovian "men in mufflers". They were frightened by difficulties and behaved in a cowardly way. Their approach to reality is not truthful and errs on the side of subjectivism.

As Lenin wrote, "our sugary writers in *Novaya Zhizn*, *Vperyod* or *Dyelo Naroda* are prepared to grant a revolution of the proletariat and other oppressed classes 'theoretically'; provided only that the revolution drops from heaven and is not born and bred on earth soaked in the blood of few years of imperialist butchery of the peoples, with millions upon millions of people exhausted, tormented and

demoralised by this butchery".¹

These "writers" go so far as to put the blame for savagery and the inevitable reprisals against the more glaring cases of savagery *on the revolution* and their whining supports the vicious encroachments of the bourgeoisie against the proletarian uprising. There is no question of their descriptions being truthful.

Lenin's article "Prophetic Words" has some profound thoughts on how to interpret and depict truthfully the contradictions caused by the socialist revolution which has come in the wake of the imperialist war as well as all the positive and great things brought by the Revolution. Lenin points out that one should on no account belittle difficulties, forget about the complex situation in which the Revolution arose and about enormous and vigorous effort which would still be needed to put an end to economic dislocation, hunger and savagery caused by the imperialist war. "...No revolution can rid itself of *such* consequences of war without a long struggle and without a number of stern measures of repression."²

Difficulties must be depicted if the greatness of the Revolution is to be revealed. But it would be wrong to confine oneself to difficulties; one must see the historical mission of the Revolution.

And Lenin goes on to compare the October Revolution with the throes of birth. That comparison has been prepared by the whole course of Lenin's thought and provides a climax of his argument. "Human childbirth is an act which transforms the woman into an almost lifeless, bloodstained heap of flesh, tortured, tormented and driven frantic by pain. But can the 'individual' that sees *only* this in love and its sequel, in the transformation of the woman into a mother, be regarded as a human being? Who would renounce love and procreation for *this* reason?"³

Lenin's article "Prophetic Words" was written on June 29, 1918, when economic dislocation and all the contradictions in the country were at their worst, less than a year after the October Revolution. The Brest Peace had given only a brief respite but the situation remained grave, with

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 497.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

external enemies seizing chunks of Russia's territory and the enemies inside the country stepping up their conspiracies and their campaign against the Revolution. And yet Lenin's article is full of confidence in the victory of the Revolution and its historic mission: "We have every reason to face the future with complete assurance and absolute confidence... We are entitled to be proud and to consider ourselves fortunate that it has come to our lot to be the first to fell in one part of the globe that wild beast, capitalism, which has drenched the earth in blood, which has reduced humanity to starvation and demoralisation and which will assuredly perish soon, no matter how monstrous and savage its frenzy in the face of death."¹

Lenin's thought develops dialectically. This kind of dialectical approach, a sober scientific analysis and awareness of history must be displayed by Soviet artists when they turn to complex historical phenomena.

IV

Lenin's approach and methodology give us guidance in solving the complex problem of the depiction of the positive and the negative in art.

In the context of socialism the negative as a category has its distinctive features. It has its own social roots and one must judge about it in a concrete way being mindful of the dialectic of social development, the correlation between the leading and moribund trends, the struggle between the positive and the negative which manifests itself in a concrete way in every specific case. In understanding the negative and depicting it in art, a great deal depends on the stand of the artist, on his attitude to life's contradictions, on what he considers to be good and bad, what he believes in, what he asserts and denounces and whether he tries to see the perspective of social development as Lenin did. The crucial question is whether he takes an advanced stand or succumbs to prejudice and preaches backward views.

In one of the articles in his book *Conversation with Colleagues* Konstantin Simonov wrote: "It is my deep conviction that the reality of our life, and the reality of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

human existence prove that the new can indeed prevail over the old in the minds of men—and this is happening before our eyes. And if one takes society as all the people together this is taking place in society. It is happening with difficulties, sometimes painfully but inexorably. And for me as a writer belief in this reality is belief in the possibility of building communism.”

Does this approach—which is profoundly justified in my view—preclude the depiction of the negative? Not at all. Soviet literature has many negative types. It has considerable experience in identifying the social nature of negative phenomena in Soviet society. It has its own principles of typifying the negative. The examples that come to mind are Gorlov (*Front* by Alexander Korneichuk), Batyuk (*Soldiers Are Not Born* by Konstantin Simonov), Potsiluiko (*Truth and Untruth* by Mikhail Stelmakh), Gratsiansky (*The Russian Forest* by Leonid Leonov), Valgan (*Battle Along the Way* by Galina Nikolayeva), Denisov (*Heading for the Storm* by Daniil Granin) and others. All these characters contain important generalisations and contribute to our struggle against negative phenomena in Soviet life.

If one takes socialism as a whole then the negative is uncharacteristic of it considering socialism's leading trend, its decisive forces, and by comparison with all the positive great things that are being asserted in our life. The positive in our life is universal and historically inevitable—it is diverse, substantiative and is bound to triumph. The future belongs to it whatever obstacles may arise in its way. To depict the negative as *characteristic of socialism as a whole* means to distort reality.

The negative in Soviet reality is a dying trend. It may be an incident or a phenomenon depending on the areas of life depicted by the writer. Of course the particular should not be treated as the typical, and certainly negative facts should not be treated as universal. This is not to say that one should pass over in silence or avoid typifying the negative. For when an artist depicts a real negative fact or phenomenon, points to its social roots, compares it to the leading trend of our life, and pronounces his judgement on it, the result is a work of social relevance. The negative in this work appears as a typical species or genus and expresses (in concrete artistic form) a moribund trend which, by the way, never surrenders without battle. Such principles of describ-

ing typical events and phenomena are fruitful and contribute to the revolutionary tradition of the socialist art.

And yet one should not forget that the greatest achievements of Soviet art are linked above all with the depiction and assertion of the positive phenomena which have materialised in the Soviet Union. Socialist art has produced its own principles of depicting the positive and has revealed the process of the moulding of the new man with all the stark and dramatic truth and all its grandeur. It has waged a relentless struggle against the negative. It is this that brought world fame to Soviet art.

The "no conflict theory" had done great damage to Soviet art because it pretended that there was no need to describe life's contradictions and reduced the function of a creative work to that of illustration. That theory isolated the positive from the sphere of contradictions and struggle and led to a simplistic and glamorised portrayal of reality. The opposite extreme, however, is equally dangerous. It is the theory of the "truth of fact" and "primary" impressions which removes the fact from its context and depicts it in isolation, reducing the writer's task to discussing the "sore" questions, i.e., to depicting only the negative sides of Soviet reality. The theory of the "truth of fact" like the "no conflict theory" diverts the writer from looking into the nature of new contradictions and consigns him to passive contemplation. Extremes meet. This happens because both these "theories" direct the writer's attention only to one side of reality, either positive or negative. Both theories virtually ignore Lenin's proposition about the dialectic of life, the unity and the struggle of contradictions (which manifest themselves differently at every stage) as the law of social development.

The questions of the nature of contradictions in Soviet society at the present stage needs further study. A great deal should be the subject of reflections and discussions. I for one believe that the fact that the socialist system does not have antagonistic contradictions (which expresses the new social nature of the system) does not mean that contradictions may not bring about acute and dramatic clashes among people in concrete situations when important questions are at stake on which depends the outcome of a cause, the fate of a character and even of a collective of people. This is how our life is presented in Galina Nikola-

yeva's *Battle Along the Way*, Mikhail Stelmakh's *Truth and Untruth*, Daniil Granin's *Heading for the Storm*, in Alexei Arbuzov's play *The Irkutsk Story*, in the films *Your Contemporary* by Yuli Raizman and *At the Lakeside* by Sergei Gerasimov. The conflicts at the basis of these works have not been picked arbitrarily. They correspond to the new level of our society, the new powerful offensive of the communist consciousness on old and outdated attitudes which impede our advance. The nature of these contradictions is quite different from those of the 1930s when the remnants of the exploitative classes survived and class struggle was acute.

The Communist Party is aware of the new nature of the conflicts. Its policy is based on a scientific approach, on the new and the positive, which yields an accurate forecast of development.

Objective scientific analysis of all the pluses and minuses, and reliance on the leading and decisive forces—this is the basis of the Leninist policy as a result of which the positive is able to manifest itself in opposition to the negative and to triumph (whatever difficulties and complexities are encountered along the way). All this exerts a tremendous impact on the masses, changes their consciousness and is reflected in all the forms of ideology including literature and the arts.

I would take issue with the critics who believe that the growing analytical element in our literature is linked with the increasingly critical attitude towards the past and with "reappraisal of values". That approach is one-sided and ignores the main thing, i.e., the positive activity of the Communist Party in which criticism and self-criticism are geared to the tasks of construction and consistent practice of the Leninist principles of party life.

In fact both trends tended to underestimate the positive achievements of the Party and the people, diverted attention from current problems, from the constructive course of the Party and creative endeavours of the Soviet people. That is why these trends have met with such strong opposition from our leading writers and critics.

In the period of full-scale building of communism the new and the positive features of life are particularly pronounced. The accumulated past achievements of the revolutionary activity of the Party and the people provide a solid

basis for further successes. To understand the essence of the new in a historical light (and the construction of communism has its own history) is only possible by understanding the dialectic of the development of communist relations which are richer, more humane and intellectually noble than under any previous social system. This is one of the main reasons for the increased concern of Soviet literature with analysis and assertion of the positive.

The struggle between the new and the old takes particularly acute forms in the sphere of consciousness, and morals, of the Soviet man. The process of remoulding people, the shaping of the new individual in the communist mould, which now engages the attention of Soviet writers and artists, proceeds in the context of fierce struggle between bourgeois and socialist ideologies for the minds and hearts of men. Soviet man is not isolated either from the past or from the influence of bourgeois propaganda; and the writer should not discount that. He is aware that in these complex conditions the Soviet man must be more demanding towards himself and other people. The Soviet man feels himself to be responsible for everything. The worth of an individual is assessed by the high moral criteria worked out in the course of the building of communism.

This is how new contradictions and new characters are portrayed by major Soviet artists, i.e., Mikhail Stelmakh in the novel *Truth and Untruth*, Leonid Leonov in *The Russian Forest*, Oles Honchar in *The Tronka*, and Chinghiz Aitmatov in his novellas. Along with the growing sense of responsibility the Soviet man increasingly reveals the universally human features of a man of the communist future. This has been expressed in the poem of Eduardas Mieželaitis called *Man*. The notion of the beautiful as applied to man changes to reflect the new nature of social relations, communist relations. It is in the sphere of emotions and thoughts of the new communist individual that the new unity between the social and the universally human is most clearly manifested, ushering in a new epoch, the epoch of the triumph of the humanity of man of which Karl Marx spoke in describing communism.

In the epoch of building communism the prime task of art is to assert the positive and to poeticise it. This goal is dictated by the dialectic of life, and the new quality of Soviet society at the present stage when the positive ac-

quires universality and provides the criterion of beauty in art; the positive in the portrayal of our life is the focus in which all the diverse phenomena of life are concentrated. That is why portraying the positive hero, showing the beauty and sterling qualities of the Soviet man—the builder of communism—is the top priority for Soviet art.

The inference should not be made that the artist must portray only the positive. He has an unlimited choice of the objects of portrayal. However, history itself has determined a new approach for him in which all the phenomena of life should be assessed and interpreted in terms of the historical inevitability and necessity of the triumph of the positive. That gives him a solid ground and enables him to preserve a correct angle whatever complex phenomena and aspects of life he is describing. An optimistic yet unblinkered sense of history is invariably a feature of the Soviet artist's world view, lending dynamic force to their works. It is predetermined by the logic of history and it introduces a new element into the art of socialist realism. The assertive and critical elements in socialist realism are inseparable. The higher the artist's ideal, the more uncompromisingly he opposes the negative.

This has a direct bearing on the problem of the positive hero. The hero of our time cannot take a passive attitude with regard to the contradictions of life. He commits his energies to the upholding of lofty ideals. Gorky said that it is impossible to do justice to the greatness of the Soviet man unless one shows with stark realism the contradictions which he has to overcome, unless one gives a full picture of the enemy he is opposing. In his letter to Afinogenov in January 1935 about his play *The Remote*, Gorky wrote: "It may appear to make no difference who is the proponent of the idea of the Ecclesiastes and who of the ideas of Lenin. But it is necessary that Lenin's idea be expressed with the force characteristic of it and that the opposite idea should be expressed with the same force."¹

While considering *The Remote* to be Afinogenov's best play Gorky objected to the fact that the idea of pessimism, which is characteristic of individualistic thinking in general, is embodied by a nonentity (a deacon). Gorky would like to see the deacon more intelligent, venomous, and a stronger

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, in thirty volumes, Vol. 30, p. 376.

enemy; at the same time he wanted to see Malko, the Bolshevik, as a larger and tougher person. "In the verbal duel with the former deacon the corps commander fails to reveal the hatred which must have been stirred in a Bolshevik's heart."¹ Then a clash of two irreconcilable ideas would have been dramatised as a clash of two powerful characters and the general spirit of the epoch would have been expressed, in Gorky's view, with greater emotional and intellectual impact. Malko would then have overwhelmed his wily enemy by "his commitment, his realism and sarcasm".²

All contemporary Soviet writers spoke of the need to be more deeply aware of the dialectic of life. Leonid Leonov, Konstantin Fedin, Konstantin Simonov, and Eduardas Mieželaitis were particularly insistent on that point. This problem is also at the focus of attention of many writers in the socialist countries. Such a major Bulgarian writer as Dimitr Dimov in his unfinished novel *The Achilles' Heel* (1966), expresses his ideas of a harmonious individual in the new mould. He believed that such an individual will emerge. How should such an individual be portrayed? After Gorky he pointed out that one expects to find in such a hero "austere courage and tender compassion, relentlessness and magnanimity, readiness to face up to difficulties and not to keep silent about them or avoid them through petty cunning... It is this blend of moral qualities in the face of truth and difficulties that accounts for the strength of the communist character."

The history of Soviet art shows that the best works were produced when the dialectic of struggle between the new and the old was shown in a corresponding artistic form, and when the opposing forces revealed their essence in sharp clashes.

Vikhrov and Gratsiansky in Leonid Leonov's novel *The Russian Forest* are bound to clash not only because they are different characters but also because they have different ideas of duty, good and evil, different criteria in assessing human behaviour. In universally human terms these ideas express with added force the new humanistic and communist values which are embodied in the talented scientist Vikhrov, who is basically a man of the people.

¹ *Ibid.*,

² *Ibid.*, p. 377.

The same is true of the conflict between Bakhirev and Valgan in Galina Nikolayeva's *Battle Along the Way*, Krylov and Tulin in *Heading for the Storm* by Daniil Granin, the clash of Gubanov with bureaucrats in Yuli Raizman's film *Your Contemporary*. These conflicts and characters are depicted with varying degrees of artistic expressiveness. The moral criteria in the novels of Nikolayeva and Granin are invested with new, universal meaning because they are based on the new communist principle of judging the behaviour of people in terms of the new sense of duty. In the case of Bakhirev and Krylov their lofty ideas of duty are in harmony with their natural impulses which determine their behaviour in all the complex situations.

These characters are not quite "ideal". Bakhirev, Krylov, Vikhrov, and Gubanov are not very happy in their family lives. They fail to achieve full harmony and happiness in private and public life, which is the ideal of every Soviet man. The writers adhere to strict realism and do not seek to idealise the private lives of their heroes. Does that detract from the scale of the typical phenomena expressed by the characters of the heroes? In some ways it does. But that does not prevent the writers from portraying the main typical features of their heroes. In social life and their moral convictions they embody the characteristic features of the contemporary man.

"A man of world view", which is Gorky's definition of a harmonious individual, today concentrates all the best features that people acquire in the process of communist construction. He is the main hero of our time. His words and deeds, the emotional and rational sides of his personality are in harmony. The formula "the hero consciously makes history and is a fighter and transformer of the world" is invested with new content today. To reveal the greatness of Soviet man building communism and find new ways of creating monumental artistic types is the main task of Soviet literature and art.

Such books as *Defying All Deaths* by Vladislav Titov, *Lipyagi* by Sergei Krutilin, *The Village at a Crossroads* by Jonas Avyžius, *Farewell*, *Gulsary* by Chinghiz Aitmatov, *Hot Snow* by Yuri Bondarev, *The Dawns Are Quiet Here* by Boris Vassilyev, and *Eternal Call* by Anatoli Ivanov have attracted wide interest precisely because their main heroes distill the characteristic features of the contemporary man.

A work which shows the contradictions of life in a correct light is assured of a long life and of producing a noticeable impact on the people's consciousness. The aesthetic idea stems from the system of images and situations and becomes a dynamic force present in every cell of the work.

V

An often quoted statement of Engels about the art's special forms discovering and asserting truth says that "the author is not obliged to serve the reader on a platter the future historical resolution of the social conflicts which he describes".¹ This statement is often construed to mean that Engels opposed tendentious art believing that the idea must be suggested by the system of images without being explicitly expressed. "The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art".²

However, Engels was not opposed to all tendentiousness. Along with Shakespeare with whom the main idea was expressed both through characters and through the circumstances in which they were placed, Engels referred to Schiller whose plays gave a more poignant and dramatised expression to ideas. Engels was opposed only to "bad" tendentiousness when instead of a historically truthful portrayal of reality there was a speculative attitude and the heroes were mouthpieces of author's preconceived and often erroneous views, as in Ferdinand Lassalle's tragedy *Franz von Sickingen*.

One can go along with the critic Rostotsky when he said that Engels' statements should be viewed in the concrete historical context in which they were made, that they should not be interpreted to mean the demand of just one form of commitment, that in the time when the main historical conflict has been resolved on much of the earth other forms are also possible, e.g., "the depiction of the leading social trend, which is the main preoccupation of socialist realism, not in a veiled form but in its stark and even dramatised form". Afinogenov, for example, along with the lyrical

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 391.

² *Ibid.*, p. 402.

drama *Oddball* wrote a romantic and politically committed play called *Salute, Spain!*

One can find, however, another aspect in Engels' statements which has a bearing on the independence of art in discovering truth. In his letter to Minna Kautsky Engels opposed simplistic and illustrative portrayal of the contradictions of life. Sheer illustrativeness amounts to a loss of the specific forms of cognition which art possesses.

Lenin, following Engels, believed that art has its own methods of revealing the truth and is capable of contributing to the latest revolutionary thought the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat, and thus creating constant interaction between theory and practice. That puts the question in a very clear form and it means that apart from talent an advanced revolutionary artist must also have a grasp of revolutionary theory. It guides him in his independent inquiry into the experience of the masses, in generalising it and discovering new phenomena and truths which contribute to advanced revolutionary thought in a way which only art can achieve.

Anatoli Lunacharsky in his *Theses on the Tasks of Marxist Criticism* (1928) wrote: "Hypotheses may also be valuable, hypotheses of extreme boldness inasmuch as the artist deals not with final solution of questions but with raising them and working on them... He is a bad artist who by his works illustrates the provisions of the programme which we have already elaborated. The value of the artist lies precisely in the fact that he raises new problems, breaks new ground and by his intuition penetrates into areas which are normally difficult to penetrate."¹

Of course the writers of our time have an advantage in their perception of the course of history compared with those of 19th-century critical realism. This stems from the fact that the main social contradiction of our time has received an optimistic resolution in the October Revolution of 1917. That historic fact invariably helps the progressive writers of the 20th century in interpreting all the complex social contradictions and tragic situations in which people may find themselves. Such writers take an optimistic view of the course of history.

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works*, in eight volumes, Vol. 8, Moscow, 1967, p. 12 (in Russian).

Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* is a classic example. It is not accidental that Sholokhov leaves Grigori Melekhov at the edge of a new conflict, as it were. The writer does not serve a ready-made solution of the socially important conflict between the individual and history in the epoch of the victorious socialist revolution. Does that weaken the impact of the work? No. The final scenes of the novel give a powerful expression to one of the main themes of *Quiet Flows the Don*. That theme—the responsibility of the individual for his acts—is particularly important in the new historical period.

The ideological impact of Soviet art and the educational role of literature depend on how actively the artist investigates new phenomena of life. The task of the artist cannot be reduced to confirming the state of affairs and serving ready-made solutions of conflicts which are coming to a head. The task of socialist art is to provoke thought and feeling, to release the energy of the masses and direct their efforts towards solving social questions and mobilising the will of the individual towards a socially useful cause. Art has its own means of contributing to the renewal of life.

By raising urgent social problems the writer can express his attitude and offer an unequivocal solution of the problems, as did Mayakovsky and Brecht, or he may follow a so-called objectivised line of portrayal in which the main message is implied by the system of images. Forms can be infinitely varied. The structure of a work—no matter what it is (“explicit”, when all the ideas are declared, or “implicit”, when the author’s message is suggested by the system of images) does not determine its value. What matters are the problems raised by the artist and his attitude towards them. Does he see the new in the light of historical necessity, or is his view superficial? What does he assert and what does he reject? That depends on many things but above all on the artist’s position and his responsibility before history and the people.

Socialist art is inherently innovative. It is capable of making discoveries, of offering new and more synthetic or, as Gorky said, hypothetical forms of generalisation. Accordingly art becomes more active and effectual, and develops new forms of generalisation to meet the challenges of our time.

Gorky’s ideas about hypothetical forms of generalisation

are still relevant today. They oppose the theories of abstract and mythological structuring of the character advanced by the adherents of modernism (Roger Garaudy).

According to Gorky, realism is inherently hypothetical. And the people's mode of thinking is hypothetical. Take such folklore characters as Prometheus, Vasilissa the Beautiful, Faustus, and Svyatogor, all of whom express popular ideas about the beautiful and the eternal struggle of good and evil. Gorky spoke about myth but, unlike Roger Garaudy, he considered it in concrete historical terms without attempting to revive it or proclaim it to be a universal form of generalisation. He considered mythology to be a syncretic mode of thought characteristic of the early stages in the development of humanity.

Gorky was aware of the power of the myth and its romantic projection into the future, its capacity to express the universal human qualities and ideas of the world, to invest a concrete character with timeless significance. But he vigorously opposed abstract invention of characters, criticised Andrei Bely and Boris Pasternak for that and broke with Leonid Andreyev who had taken up a decadent attitude.

Hypothetical characters are a result of profound knowledge of reality and of artistic foresight. It is generalisation concentrated to portray real facts and create types of universal significance. The characteristic features of life, once they have been discovered and understood by the writer, gain particular impact through artistic expression. The result is a character of the same power of generalisation as Faust, expressive of the rich world of an individual and the philosophy of his time. In that respect realism opposes abstractionism.

Roger Garaudy does not believe that socialist realism is capable of reflecting living reality in all its dialectical complexity and scope. He looks for a blend of the subjective and the objective not in a real character but in an abstract substratum. He proclaims the primacy of the abstract over the real and concrete to be a feature of the artistic thought of the 20th century in general. That is why he inveighs against socialist realism, accuses it of naturalism and believes that this form of art has outlived itself and does not correspond to the thinking of the 20th century. Roger Garaudy prefers modernistic and surrealist forms of art. By

holding up abstract hyperbole as a principle he considers that a character reflecting the abstract substratum is the only form of constructive thinking in the 20th century. Roger Garaudy replaces realism by modernism and the understanding of the world through characters by abstract mythmaking. In his book *20th-Century Marxism* he goes as far as to deny that Lenin's theory of reflection is capable of explaining new forms of thought and new forms of art.

Gorky, that great artist of the 20th century, was looking for new forms of vivid artistic description of heroic reality on the basis of socialist realism and of the achievements of world classic art; he spoke about a synthesis of realism and romanticism, the need to create monumental generalisations in which fancy and reality are in harmony and get a new lease of life in art. Gorky did not separate romantic forms from realistic ones and it was never his idea that realism reflects drab everyday life while romanticism reflects lofty heroics. On the contrary, he believed that realism, especially socialist realism, is capable of doing justice to heroic reality. Romanticism reflects the creative pathos of socialist reality and the heroic deeds of the Soviet man, and is an organic part of realistic writing.

Gorky opposed naturalism and said that art must "rise over reality" in order to grasp its laws. He was concerned with new forms of the relationship between the subjective and objective elements in an artist's work, about the increased creative and transformative role of art. An artist can achieve that if he espouses a scientific world view. His imagination and generalisations are then forms of reality and not arbitrary constructions.

According to Gorky, invention is the sister of hypothesis. It is generalisation of what is already nascent but has not yet taken shape. If one adds to the existing what is probable, the result is a hypothetical image or character. That is very important for an artist of socialist realism. He commits his imagination to give tangible reality to new and nascent phenomena which, being his creation and artistic discovery (hypothetical image) anticipate reality. This has nothing to do with idealisation or embellishment of reality. It is the law of artistic work. A writer can detect new emerging conflicts and contradictions. He may depict negative phenomena at a stage when they have not yet fully revealed their pernicious character but are capable of doing harm to

society if they are not opposed. Such a form of generalising reality can have an impact far greater than simple copy of reality. In the hypothetical method of generalisation there is a new combination of profound ideas and conscious historical perception of real life and artistic imagination, which is always a measure of a writer's talent and skill.

When Gorky spoke about hypothetical forms of generalisation he was in fact elaborating the inherent qualities of socialist realism as a method which combines the achievements of science and creative élan, opening vistas for the artist to embrace all forms of human existence. Only then can socialist realism be "ahead of its time", offer large-scale synthetic pictures of reality, predict the future, and have an active influence on life.

On the aesthetic level, Gorky in urging the need to find new forms of generalisation and to combine the discoveries of science and art, was reinterpreting Engels' idea about the art of the future which would achieve complete harmony between great depth of ideas and profound understanding of historical message with Shakespearean vitality and drive. A consciously historical approach provides the basis for hypothetical forms of generalisation which enable the artist to survey the past, present and future from the height of the communist world view. Realism acquires new qualities. All forms of 20th-century thought, all the nuances of man's feelings and strivings are within its range. To this end realism can use the achievements of all forms of art, including heroic romanticism, provided these forms help to multiply colours and enhance the ideological and artistic impact of flesh-and-blood characters. All that merely makes realism more effective and strengthens the contribution of art to the advance of history. The successes in the building of socialism, which blazes mankind's trail to universal well-being, have enabled the Soviet artists to discern the ideal in reality, to poeticise the positive and expose everything that impedes our progress towards communism. It is the artist's duty to bring great ideas to the world.

As Martiros Saryan, the famous Armenian painter, said in one of his articles, "A work of genius is always in some way an answer to the question about the meaning of life: it is as if the creator shows in bold relief the intuitive understanding of the essence of life which every person has."

More and more artists are raising their voices in favour of

the need for larger generalisations and important works which rise to the challenges of our time. Marietta Shaginyan writes: "Centuries will pass, perhaps years, and those who will succeed us will stand in awe of the historical panorama of our time. What chisel, brush or pen—perhaps only music—could match the abundance of grandiose contrasts, oppositions, profound conflicts, amid which lives our art and which it has not even touched, let alone grasp in their full magnitude? To this day we see the themes of Shakespeare as unattainable summits and, far from being exhausted, these themes seem to be deepening."

Socialist realism is, of its very nature, an art of great generalisations, monumental images and typical characters. It has a global impact in artistic interpretation of our time and in revealing the broadening intellectual range of the new man. It is developing dynamically and is going from strength to strength. And this is the fruition of the dreams and predictions of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

NAME INDEX

A

Abramov, Fyodor—20, 15
 Afinogenov, Alexander—327, 330
 Aitmatov, Chinghiz—263, 326, 329
 Alexeyev, Mikhail—225-28, 236-38
 Aliger, Margarita—53, 118
 Ananiev, Anatoly—150
 Andreyev, Leonid—333
 Antokolsky, Pavel—53, 118
 Arbuzov, Alexei—325
 Aristotle—71
 Armand, Inessa—49
 Avdeyenko, Alexander—47
 Avyzius, Jonas—221, 247-51, 329

B

Babel, Isaac—47
 Balsac, Honoré de—18, 22, 32, 44-45
 Barbusse, Henri—78-79
 Bauman, Nikolai—90
 Bek, Alexander—264
 Belinsky, Vissarion—22, 31, 72, 208
 Belov, Vassili—202-05
 Bely, Andrei—62, 333
 Bergoltz, Olga—265, 267-68
 Bieliauskas, Alfonsas—314
 Bill-Belotserkovsky, Vladimir—47
 Blagoy, Dmitry—24
 Blok, Alexander—63

Bondarchuk, Sergei—143
 Bondarev, Yuri—150-54, 329
 Borisova, Inna—203
 Brecht, Bertolt—332
 Bulgakov, Mikhail—67-70
 Butor, Michel—50
 Bykov, Vasil—9, 150, 265-66, 282-92, 307

C

Camus, Albert—50
 Cathala, Jean—130
 Chaliapin, Fyodor—111
 Chekhov, Anton—279
 Chernyshevsky, Nikolai—11, 18, 22, 31, 236, 289
 Chuikov, Vassili—161

D

Dahl, Vladimir—31
 Dante, Alighieri—18, 174
 Dimov, Dimitr—328
 Dobrolyubov, Nikolai—31, 34, 81
 Dostoyevsky, Fyodor—93
 Dovzhenko, Alexander—236
 Düwel, Wolf—194

E

Ehrenburg, Ilya—105, 108
 Eisenstein, Sergei—46, 264
 Engels, Friedrich—18, 21-22, 25, 30, 32, 45, 81, 180, 330-31, 335-36
 Eremenko, Andrei—161
 Ermilov, Vladimir—35

F

Fadeyev, Alexander—43-47, 57-60, 70, 102, 156, 195, 236
Fedin, Konstantin—108, 188-99, 328
Flaubert, Gustave—69
Fomenko, Vladimir—234-35, 237, 252-58, 260
Furmanov, Dmitry—8, 46-47, 119

G

Gaidar, Arkady—115
Gamzatov, Rasul—268-69
Garaudy, Roger—333-34
Gerasimov, Sergei—325
Gladkov, Fyodor—47, 105-06
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von—20
Gogol, Nikolai—23, 70
Gorbatov, Boris—264, 266
Gorky, Maxim—7-8, 16, 39-42, 50, 53, 55, 57, 65, 68, 70-71, 73, 76, 78, 89-96, 101-02, 105, 109, 127-28, 210, 230, 236, 250, 277, 289, 302, 306, 309, 315-19, 327-29, 332-35
Granin, Daniil—323, 325, 329
Grigorovich, Dmitry—31
Grossman Vassili—154-56, 158-63, 165, 187-88, 264

H

Harkness, Margaret—21
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich—37, 310-11, 315
Hemingway, Ernest—73, 77-78
Hint, Aadu—136
Hoffmann, Ernst Theodor Amadeus—70
Honchar, Oles—218-21, 233, 252, 254, 265-66, 326
Hugo, Victor—18

I

Ilienkov, Vassili—105
Inber, Vera—53

Isayev, Egor—54
Ivanov, Anatoli—133-35, 329
Ivanov, Vsevolod—47, 68, 230

K

Kalinin, Anatoli—238
Katayev, Valentin—8, 47, 88, 106, 254
Kautsky, Minna—331
Kazakov, Yuri—209
Khardjiyev, Nikolai—62
Khlebnikov, Velemir—62-65, 70
Khrapchenko, Mikhail—30, 35
Kochetkov, Gennady—221
Korneichuk, Alexander—116-18, 143, 175, 185, 323
Kron, Alexander—146-47
Krutilin, Sergei—204, 215-18, 228, 235-36, 238, 252, 329
Krymov, Yuri—47, 113-15
Krzhizhanovsky, Gleb—268
Kuznetsov, Mikhail—308-09

L

Lafargue, Laura—21
Lapikov, Ivan—239-40
Lassale, Ferdinand—25, 81, 330
Lavrenev, Boris—68
V. I. Lenin—16, 18, 22, 37-39, 45, 49, 51-53, 78, 81-82, 88, 94, 97-98, 100, 103, 138, 178-79, 230, 255, 259, 261, 268, 309-12, 315-22, 324, 327, 331, 334, 336
Leonov, Leonid—41, 59, 85, 87, 105, 108, 116, 125-29, 195, 210, 323, 326, 328
Lermontov, Mikhail—19
Libedinsky, Yuri—88
Livs, Egons—314
Lomonosov, Mikhail—303
Lugovskoi, Vladimir—62
Lumumba, Patrice—137
Lunacharsky, Anatoly—89, 331

M

Makarenko, Anton—47
Malyshkin, Alexander—47, 106-08

Mandelstam, Ossip—62
 Marcinkevicius, Justinas—138
 Marx, Karl—82, 180, 326, 336
 Mayakovsky, Vladimir—50-53,
 63, 70, 85, 240, 266, 332
 Melezh, Ivan—221
 Metchenko, Alexei—68
 Miezslaitis, Eduardas—54, 326,
 328
 Milton, John—18
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus—282

N

Nagibin, Yuri—228
 Nekrasov, Nikolai—23, 31-34,
 63, 227
 Nikolayeva, Galina—56, 241,
 323-25, 329

O

Ovcharenko, Alexander—54
 Ovechkin, Valentin—201, 211,
 259, 264
 Ostrovsky, Nikolai—47, 103

P

Panfyorov, Fyodor—47
 Pasternak, Boris—62, 65-66, 70,
 333
 Paustovsky, Konstantin—47,
 109-12
 Pertsov, Victor—62
 Pervomaisky, Leonid—147-49
 Pisemsky, Alexei—31
 Plekhanov, Georgi—264
 Pogodin, Nikolai—87-88
 Polonsky, Vyacheslav—97-98
 Proskurin, Pyotr—240-246, 248
 Pudovkin, Vsevolod—163
 Pushkin, Alexander—20-30, 33-
 34, 39, 219, 274

R

Rabelais, François—18
 Raizman, Yul. 325, 329
 Ravel, Maurice Joseph—279
 Reizov, Boris—44-45
 Remarque, Erich Maria—73, 77-
 78

Rembrandt—180
 Robbe-Grillet, Alain—50
 Rolland, Romain—39
 Rostotsky, Boleslav—330
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques—35
 Rozhdestvensky, Robert—54

S

Saltykov, Alexei—228
 Sarraute, Nathalie—50
 Sartre, Jean-Paul—50
 Saryan, Martiros—335
 Schiller, Friedrich—330
 Seifullina, Lydia—55
 Selvinsky, Ilya—62
 Serafimovich, Alexander—70
 Shaginyan, Marietta—108, 336
 Shakespeare, William—330, 336
 Shevchenko, Taras—303
 Sholokhov, Mikhail—47, 50, 70,
 73-77, 87, 104-05, 129-32,
 143-46, 238, 253, 257-58,
 264, 305, 313, 332
 Shundik, Nikolai—237
 Simmons, Ernest—54, 60
 Simonov, Konstantin—70, 116,
 163-88, 314, 322-23, 328
 Sirge, Ralf—136
 Smelyakov, Yaroslav—136-38
 Smuul, Juhan—265, 267, 269-82
 Sobolev, Leonid—47, 264
 Soloukhin, Vladimir—268
 Stalin, Iosif—180, 215
 Stanislavsky, Konstantin—20
 Stavsky, Vladimir—115
 Stelmakh, Mikhail—228-30, 236,
 265, 292-306, 323, 325-26
 Stepanov, Nikolai—62, 64

T

Tendryakov, Vladimir—201,
 205, 221-25
 Tikhonov, Nikolai—53, 108, 118
 Timofeyeva, Vera—309
 Titov, Vladislav—329
 Tolstoy, Alexei—11-12, 82, 87,
 96-101
 Tolstoy, Lev—17, 22-23, 25, 35-
 41, 45, 172, 180, 191,
 196-97, 245, 310

Trenev, Konstantin—68, 102
Turgenev, Ivan—120, 203, 227
Tvardovsky, Alexander—118-24,
264
Tynyanov, Yuri—62

U

Ulyanov, Mikhail—231

V

Vassilyev, Boris—329
Vershigora, Pyotr—119

Vesioly, Artyom—87
Viardot, Claudine—120
Vishnevsky, Vsevolod—87-88,
102
Voltaire, François Marie Arou-
et—266
Voronko, Platon—138
Voznesensky, Andrei—54

Z

Zabolotsky, Nikolai—62
Zarudny, Mikola—221